

Congressmember Sam Farr: Five Decades of Public Service

Interviewed and Edited by Irene Reti

Santa Cruz

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Congressmember Sam Farr. Photos by Randy Tunnell

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Contents

Introduction	1
Early Life	13
Fred Farr	25
Education	30
Growing up in Carmel, California	36
John F. Kennedy	41
Peace Corps in Colombia	44
Two Tragedies	52
An Epiphany: Beginning Political Life	61
Working as Staff for the California State Legislature	66
The Soberanes Fire	72
Becoming a Monterey County Supervisor	73
Organizing a Bike Ride in Support of the California Coastal Act	76
Land Use Planning	85
Issues on the Big Sur Coast	90
Working to Improve Local Government	93
Working to Stop Offshore Oil Drilling and to Establish the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary	96
Sustainable Resource Management	103
Santa Cruz as a Marine Research Cluster	104
The Blue Economy, Ecological Tourism, and Watchable Wildlife	106
The Impact of Proposition 13 at the Local Level	112
Creating the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District	116
The Power of Local Government	127
Running for the California State Assembly	131
Caught in a Political Battle for Speaker of the House	132

Farr’s Staff at the California State Legislature	138
Developing Standards for Wine Grape Growing	144
Passing the Groundbreaking Organic Certification Law	146
Animal Humane Issues	151
Origin Labeling Law	160
Oil Spill Liability Law	165
Divestment from South Africa	169
Breathalyzer Ignition Lock Bill	176
California Assault Weapons Bill of 1990	178
A Time of Transition in California Politics	181
Impressions of California Governors	190
Ending Corporal Punishment in California Public Schools	200
Congressman with a Camera: Farr as Photographer	204
California Oceans Resources Management Act (CORMA)	209
The Impact of Proposition 13 at the State Level	222
The Rise of the Initiative Industrial Complex in California	227
Speaker Willie Brown	233
“The Team of California”	240
Deciding to Run for the United States House of Representatives	242
The Fort Ord Re-Use Authority	247
Arriving in the United States Congress	276
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)	282
Defense of Marriage Act	288
Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Terrorists	291
Hillary Clinton’s Health Care Plan	294
Newt Gingrich and the Republican Revolution	296
The Effort to Impeach President Bill Clinton	304

More on the Fort Ord Conversion	312
Serving on the Appropriations Committee	315
The Events and Impact of September 11, 2001	317
The Iraq War	326
The Patriot Act	331
The Iraq Resolution of 2002	335
No Child Left Behind	346
Working for Organic Agriculture on the Federal Level	354
Working on Federal Organic Standards	357
Founding and Co-Chairing the Organic Caucus	359
The Farm Bill	361
Fair Trade Sustainable Coffee	364
NAFTA and the Cut Flower Industry	369
Agri-Tourism	379
Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act of 2002	382
Point 16	401
Pinnacles National Park	408
Proposals for Development at Elkhorn Slough	415
National Oceans Policy Act, Oceans 21	422
White House Conference on the Oceans	423
Developing a National Oceans Policy	427
Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act	434
Ocean Acidification Research Bill	437
Reflections on the Elections Process	439
The Importance of Casework	447
Town Hall Meetings	450
Campaign Finance Reform	452

Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi	457
Hastert, Majority of the Majority, Rule	462
Cuba	465
Colombia	474
Obamacare	479
Immigration	496
Gun Control	509
The Farr Family	514
Key Staff	521
Final Reflections	526
Final Interview, After Retirement	529
Veterans—Department of Defense Health Clinic, Fort Ord	530
California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery	538
Fort Hunter Liggett	544
Salad Bar in Every School and School Lunch Program	552
Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act	564
Rohrabacher-Farr Amendment Medical Cannabis Amendment	568
Sam Farr Peace Corps Enhancement Act	575
More about President Barack Obama	582
The Election of President Donald Trump	590
About the Interviewer	594
Endnotes	595

Introduction

I'm in a large, wood-paneled room in the beautiful Gabriel de la Torre adobe building in historic downtown Monterey, California. This structure was California's first federal courthouse (circa 1841) and now houses the Big Sur Land Trust. The walls feature evocative and magnificent photographs of the Big Sur coast. I sit at a massive conference table, nervously sipping coffee. The Big Sur Land Trust has graciously given me use of this room to conduct an oral history with Congressman Sam Farr and today is our first interview. I thumb through my topic outline for what must be the tenth time.

The front door opens and I hear the staff warmly greeting Congressman Farr. They usher him into the room and we shake hands. Within a few moments I have completely forgotten that I was nervous and we embark on what will become a nearly 25-hour oral history journey conducted over eight different sessions between July 2016 and March of 2017. From that first moment, I am completely engaged by Farr's gift for telling a good story. My question, "Where were you born?" elicits this wonderful tale:

"I was born in San Francisco on July 4 in 1941," Congressman Farr (who soon tells me to just call him "Sam") tells me. "And my father [told me] that there was another fellow in the hospital waiting for a delivery, who was a very conservative Republican. My father was a Democrat. They were both of them excited about having babies on July 4. He was having a son, too. And this father, the Republican father, was just really into everything, and had all Fourth of July red, white, and blue stuff. I was born just before midnight on July 4 and his son

was born just *after* midnight. So my father got joy out of at least a Democrat preceding a Republican on the fourth of July. His son was born on July 5 and I'm July 4th."

Samuel "Sharon" Farr was born into a family that extends back five generations in California. His father's grandfather was the brother of Senator William Sharon, who arrived in San Francisco during the Gold Rush. On his mother's (Janet Haskins) side, Farr also has deep California roots; his mother's father, Sam Haskins, was a regent for the University of California and a prominent liberal lawyer in Los Angeles.

Sam's father, Fred Farr, was an attorney and served as a California state senator from Carmel from 1955 to 1966. He was the first Democrat in forty-three years elected to represent the Central Coast. Senator Fred Farr was a pioneer in both social justice and environmental protection and well-known on the national political scene. He established California's scenic highway program; prevented the state from building a freeway along the Big Sur coast; and halted the construction of an oil refinery in Moss Landing on what is now Elkhorn Slough Natural Reserve. Fred Farr is also known for sponsoring a law requiring toilets in the fields for farmworkers. He died in 1997. Sam Farr was very close to this father and discusses his father's accomplishments throughout his oral history.

While Farr was inspired by both of his parents, he had no early aspirations for a career in legislative politics like his father. He was mostly raised in Carmel, California (after the family spent some time on the East Coast and in Puerto Rico) before it became an expensive tourist town. Farr recalled, "It was such a

wonderful growing-up experience. Nobody locked their cars, locked their houses. There was no fear.” The young Sam Farr discovered a love for the natural environment while roaming through the hills and along the beaches of the Monterey Peninsula and Carmel Valley. His mother gave him a love for the outdoors and for gardening. At Carmel High School, he found a mentor in his biology teacher, Enid Larson. His life plan at that time was to study biology in college and return to Carmel to teach high school. Farr struggled with undiagnosed dyslexia during his youth and later became a passionate advocate for people with this then-unrecognized disability. He graduated from Carmel High School in 1959 and journeyed north to earn his BA in biology at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon.

After graduation, Farr served in the Peace Corps in Medellín, Colombia in 1964, where he honed community development skills in an experience that was to be one of the most formative of his life. They called us “*Hijos de Kennedy* because Kennedy invented the Peace Corps,” he said. “That was life-changing for me. I found my own identity, and found my self-esteem, and found my passion for trying to eliminate the root causes of poverty, now really understanding what those causes were.”

But it was also while he was in the Peace Corps that Farr’s life was forever altered by two terrible tragedies that afflicted his family. The first was the unexpected death of his mother from cancer; the second was a horrendous horseback riding accident that killed his sister, Nancy, while the family was visiting Sam in Colombia. It is likely that his sister would not have died on the operating table in a Colombian hospital if she had had access to better medical

care. In this oral history, Farr spoke with candor and remarkable emotional courage about the effect these two events had on the trajectory of his life. This was the point where he had an epiphany and decided to dedicate himself to fighting the war on poverty through a career in public service, a trajectory that eventually led him to a career as a U.S. congressman.

After a brief stint in law school at Santa Clara University, which did not feel like the right path for him, Farr worked as professional staff in the California assembly for the next decade. He served under the longtime legislative analyst Alan Post, helping write cost-effectiveness studies of categorical education programs. Later he became staff to the Constitutional Revision Commission. While he was a staffer, in 1972 Farr helped organize a groundbreaking and now legendary coastal bike ride from San Francisco to San Diego, to raise awareness and support for Proposition 20, the Coastal Zone Conservation Act, which resulted in the California Coastal Commission. The Coastal Bike Ride makes another colorful story: "It was the first kind of effective use of using bike rides as an organizing tool, to make a political statement, and to demonstrate to the press. And I think we won the hearts and minds of people because we didn't spend a lot on that initiative [Proposition 20], and it passed [in 1972]. And the rest is history."

Farr was developing valuable experience as a staffer in the California State Legislature, but he yearned to return to Carmel and serve in local politics. That opportunity presented itself in 1975, when there was a sudden vacancy on the Monterey County Board of Supervisors which needed to be filled by an appointment from then-governor Jerry Brown. With humor and love, Sam tells

the story of how he ended up (successfully) vying with his father for that appointment. The next year (1976) he ran for official election to secure that office.

Farr served as a Monterey County Supervisor, representing District 5 from 1975 to 1980. As a supervisor, he helped accomplished many things, including writing the Master Plan for Big Sur; developing the Carmel Highlands Master Plan; the Pebble Beach Master Plan; and the Master Plan for the Carmel Valley. Farr also chaired the Monterey Bay regional planning body, LAFCO [Local Agency Formation Commission] and spearheaded the creation of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, leading a historic breakthrough in the regionalization of water management in California.

During this period, Farr formed a powerful organizational alliance across the bay with Santa Cruz activists, including Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton, to stop oil drilling on the Central Coast. This alliance later blossomed into the groundbreaking effort to create the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. In this section of his oral history, Farr argues for the importance of what he calls the Blue Economy, based on conservation of ocean resources, rather than exploitation.

On June 6, 1978, California's voters passed Proposition 13, reducing property tax rates on homes, businesses and farms, and freezing them at the 1976 assessed value level. Proposition 13 also limited increases on any given property to no more than 2 percent per year, as long as the property was not sold. This proposition marked a turning point in California's economic history. An

extensive segment of this narrative is devoted to Farr's reflections on the impact of this proposition.

In 1980, another chapter began when Farr was elected to the California State Assembly, representing the 27th Assembly District. While in the assembly, Farr authored the 1990 California Organic Standards Act (COFA), which established standards for organic food production and sales in California. This groundbreaking legislation became one of the models for the National Organic Program's federal organic standards and is one of the reasons why the international organic farming movement considers Sam Farr one of its heroes. While in the assembly, Farr also wrote one of the country's strictest oil spill liability laws and the California Ocean Resources Management Act (CORMA).

Both the Humane Society and PETA have honored Farr for his lifelong work on behalf of animal rights; while in the assembly he worked on a bill banning certain types of steel-jawed animal traps; a bill increasing state regulations on the transportation of horses to slaughterhouses; and a bill banning the purchase of dogs in California from puppy mills. During Farr's period in the California State Assembly he also worked on issues such as banning corporal punishment in public schools; requiring the labeling of all agricultural products sold in California by their country of origin; and authorizing the installation of ignition interlock ("Breathalyzer") devices in automobiles operated by drivers with DUI convictions. This narrative delves into the rich stories behind each of these accomplishments. Farr also reflects on changes during that period of California electoral politics and shares his firsthand impressions of Governors Jerry Brown,

Ronald Reagan, George Deukmejian, and Pete Wilson, as well as Speaker of the House Willie Brown.

As a California legislator, Farr found California political life deeply satisfying in those last years before the rise and rigidification of partisan politics. He remembered, “What you build in Sacramento is this incredible esprit de corps about California. Everybody there is from one place, called California. You are either from rural California or urban California—big urban, like LA, or small communities like Monterey or Carmel. But the thing is, everybody is on this team. It’s called the Team of California... 5:00 o’clock, it was like a regular working day, we’re out. But I’m not going home. Everybody lives there in apartments. So let’s go to dinner! And you got to dinner and you’re sitting there with the Republicans that you’ve been arguing with all day long. But you’re telling jokes. And, “You want to go skiing this weekend? What are your kids doing?” I’d organize ski trips and sometimes more Republicans would go than Democrats. And we’d always have a great time.”

So, I asked Farr what motivated him to want to leave the State Capitol and run for the U.S. Congress. “That’s a great question,” he quipped. “Because I didn’t. I was very happy in the assembly.” But an unexpected opportunity arose in 1993 when Congressman Leon Panetta, who was representing Farr’s district in the U.S. House of Representatives, was tapped by the incoming Clinton administration to serve as director of the Office of Management and Budget. After days of deliberation, Farr decided to run in the special election. As state assemblymember, Farr was already deeply involved in the Fort Ord Resuse Authority (FORA), which had been targeted for closure by the BRAC (Base

Realignment and Closure) Commission in 1991. Part of Farr's motivation for running for Congress was that he believed that as a U.S. congressman he would be better able to help secure a university on the site of Fort Ord. Farr would indeed be successful in this endeavor; in 1994 California State University, Monterey Bay opened on the site, an institution that is near and dear to him today. He had other visions for Fort Ord as well, some of which were realized and some of which were not. Farr's in-depth discussion of the complex political story of the re-use of Fort Ord is one of the gems of this oral history.

Because he came into office during a special election, Farr arrived in Washington, D.C. six months later than most of his freshmen cohort. Bill Clinton was president. The Democrats held a majority in Congress. But in the November 1994 election the political landscape was to change dramatically. The Republican Party gained a majority of seats in the House of Representatives for the first time since 1952, in what became known as the Republican Revolution. The Republicans united under Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich's platform Contract with America, which promised to shrink the size of the federal government and promote lower taxes. A new era in American politics began. Farr was to have a front-row seat in this political arena for the next twenty-three years, until his retirement on January 3, 2017.

This oral history provides a colorful, up-close, and sometimes painful view of the myriad of complex issues Congress engaged with during the twelve terms Farr served, including (but certainly not restricted to) the North American Free Trade Agreement, gay marriage, the terrorist acts of 9/11; the war in Iraq, the passage of Obamacare, immigration rights, organic farming standards, the U.S.

relationship with Cuba, ongoing controversies over gun control, and ocean and land conservation.

One of Farr's most lasting legacies will be his leadership in the area of ocean conservation. He authored many bills on behalf of ocean health, including H.R. 21, the Oceans Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act ("OCEANS 21") which recommended having a national policy on the oceans similar to the national policies set forth in the Clean Air Act. He shares his fond recollections of the groundbreaking White House Conference on the Oceans which took place in Monterey, California on the steps of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Farr authored the Southern Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act, to establish a program of research and other activities to aid the recovery of the southern sea otter. Through his sponsorship of the Marine Debris Act Amendments of 2012, Farr created a NOAA program that uses innovative solutions to protect marine ecosystems and coastal communities from the hazards of marine debris. He introduced the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act of 2015, to establish an Ocean Acidification Advisory Board of diverse experts to analyze and help guide policy on this important ocean issue. Farr was also a founding member and chair of the House Oceans Caucus. Both the Monterey Bay Aquarium and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center have recently honored Farr's lifelong contributions to ocean conservation.ⁱⁱ

On shore, Farr leaves quite an extensive legacy of parks he helped establish on the Central Coast, including Pinnacles National Park, created from the former Pinnacles National Monument by legislation introduced by Farr into Congress in

2012, and signed into law by President Barack Obama in January of 2013. Someone once asked Farr what he wanted to be remembered for and he replied, “I guess, if you look at all the parks I created as a supervisor, parks I created as a state legislator, and parks I created, including a national park, as a congressman—I’m the parks guy. The John Muir of the Central Coast.”

Farr always remained accessible to constituents and truly seemed to enjoy this direct contact with people from his district. He explained, “What really gets you elected is the grunt work that you do in the office every day in the office with constituents coming in to see you about their problems, being a good listener, being available, not just saying, ‘Well, he’s not here,’ or, ‘He’s too busy, Or, ‘He’s somewhere else.’ I think that’s sort of the Peace Corps volunteer in me that just loved to hear every story and to try to do something about it.”

In his oral history, Farr also shares firsthand recollections of key political figures such as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Presidents H.W. and George Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama. We had fun talking about his unique role as what the *Atlantic Monthly*¹⁶ termed “the camera-wielding congressman.” Farr loves portrait photography and his candid photographs of his congressional colleagues helped him form relationships on both sides of the aisle. As an aside, I want to add that I am also a photographer and will treasure several conversations with Farr in which we shared our photographs and our passion for photographic endeavors.

All oral histories are shaped by the historical moment during which they are recorded. But the time period during which this particular oral history was

conducted took on almost biblical characteristics. Most of my interview sessions with Farr occurred during the summer of 2016. That summer much of Big Sur burned, in what became one of the most expensive wildfires in U.S. history, the Soberanes Fire. The flames persisted for 83 days, charring 132,127 acres, destroying houses and closing roads. Sometimes when the wind blew our direction, smoke from the fire literally filled the room in Monterey where Farr and I sat talking of the past. Meanwhile, intense political fires smoldered and then ignited during the volatile election that ultimately resulted in the presidency of Donald Trump. References to both of these fires infuse this transcript.

I transcribed and also audit/edited this oral history. Farr reviewed and edited the voluminous transcript with dedication and very careful attention. I would like to thank him for the tremendous generosity and kindness he brought to this endeavor and for his willingness to make time for this project during a period of major transition in his life. Working on this oral history with Sam has become one of the highlights of my thirty-year career in oral history and I shall always be grateful for this opportunity. I have learned so much, not only about politics, but also about a life lived with integrity and heart.

I would also like to thank several individuals who assisted with me with research and logistics. Thank you to Dan Haifley, director of O'Neill Sea Odyssey and former director of Save Our Shores, who downloaded his recollections of Farr's involvement in marine conservation issues over a delicious lunch at the Crow's Nest Restaurant. On a walk we took around the Santa Cruz Harbor, Ellen Farmer told me stories about Farr's trips to Cuba. I would like to thank my

brother, Steven Reti, who teaches political science, and provided me with valuable background on both California and federal politics. Appreciation to Tracy Rhoades of the Big Sur Land Trust and Jayne Mohammadi at Supervisor David Potter's office in Monterey for their kindness in providing conference rooms where several of these interview sessions took place, as well as to Farr's scheduler, Jennifer Fahselt, for her calm and helpful assistance, and District Director Alec Alargo for reviewing my topic outline. Copies of this volume are on deposit in Special Collections and in the circulating stacks at the UCSC Library, as well as on the library's website. The Regional History Project is supported administratively by Teresa Mora, Interim Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Elizabeth Cowell.

—*Irene Reti, Director, Regional History Project, University Library, UC Santa Cruz*

Early Life

Reti: So today is July 21, 2016, and this is Irene Reti. I am here with Congressman Sam Farr in a fabulous room at the Big Sur Land Trust in downtown Monterey, in this historic adobe, which I've been enjoying looking at this morning. So, we're starting your oral history today and we're going to start with your early life, and get a sense of who you are—

Farr: (laughs)

Reti: —and who your family is. So, let's start with when and where you were born?

Farr: I was born in San Francisco on July 4 in 1941. And my father was telling a story that there was another fellow in the hospital waiting for a delivery, who was a very conservative Republican. My father was a Democrat. They were both of them excited about having babies on July 4. He was having a son, too. And this father, the Republican father, was just really into everything, and had all Fourth of July red, white, and blue stuff.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I was born just before midnight on July 4 and his son was born just *after* midnight.

Reti: Oooh!

Farr: So, my father got joy out of at least a Democrat preceding a Republican on the Fourth of July. His son was born on July 5 and I'm July 4th.



A Young Sam Farr with his Father (Fred Farr), Mother (Janet Farr), and Sister (Nancy Farr). Circa 1955
"A Young Sam Farr with his Father, Mother, and Sister" (1955). *Photographs*. 18.
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/samfarr_photos_all/18



California State Senator Fred Farr Presenting at a Scenic Highway Workshop Meeting, 1962
State of California Department of Works, Division of Highways, "Fred Farr Presenting at a Scenic Highway Workshop Meeting, 1962" (1962). *Photographs*. 3.
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/fredfarr_photos_all/3

I was born in Children's Hospital. And in those days, the women went to the hospital and the husbands weren't around. There were no birthing centers. My mother was in the hospital for a while. A woman named Nancy Emmons, who just passed away at age 100, told me recently she was in the room with my mother, sitting there, and watched me—the first feeding, and everything like that.

And later on, in 1947, my youngest sister, Nancy, who was later killed in an accident visiting me in Colombia—she was born in the same hospital, and in the same room. So, we have these ties to San Francisco as young children.

Reti: And when did your family come to California?

Farr: Well, I think we go back five generations. I'm not sure exactly when that original generation came, but I know my father's family came from a famous pioneering family here called the Sharon family. His grandfather was the brother of Senator William Sharon[™], who ended up moving from the East to San Francisco in the Gold Rush, and was hired by Ralston, who was sort of building San Francisco, and the president of the Bank of California, who had a lot of interest in mining and mining stocks. He sent Sharon up to Virginia City to be in charge of the Mother Lode mining operation. It was very political. Sharon was able to make a huge fortune for the bank, and at the same time bought his way into the United States Senate when the legislature chose senators. And he gave them all stock in the mining operation. He was a pretty shady guy. (laughs) He was just not an honest businessman. And the minute he got elected, he sold all his stock, and the stock crashed. And so, the legislators never— And he didn't go

back to the Senate, according to the stories, for a long time, because he was interested in the mining stuff. He lived in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco but he represented the state of Nevada in the United States Senate.

There were only two sons. My father had one brother, my uncle. My father's mother died when my father was twelve, and his brother had already moved away. So, he was raised by his aunts and uncles, and one of his aunts, Florence Brown, lived in Carmel. So, he came here as a young child, to be living with her for a while, and went to Sunset School, but returned to the Bay Area to attend Piedmont High School. He served as student body president. I think Clint Eastwood's mother was a classmate. Fred Farr ended up going to undergraduate at Berkeley and then graduate school at Boalt Hall. And at that time, he met my mother, who was from Los Angeles, as a young undergraduate at Cal [UC Berkeley]. [They] were very involved in student activities, and politics, and sororities, and fraternity life, and all that.

My mother's father was a regent for the University of California. He was a very prominent lawyer in Los Angeles.

Reti: What was his name?

Farr: He was named Samuel Moody Haskins (b. 1848, d. 1972) and I'm named after him. My first name is Sam. My mother's maiden name was Haskins. And her father had gone to Berkeley also and became a lawyer, but not through law school. He became a lawyer by studying with judges. And he ended up becoming the clerk for the city of Los Angeles. His job mostly in those days—this was before the turn of the 20th century, the 1900s—was to file claims of utility

development. The big utility developer was Huntington, who had made his money in the railroads, but had moved to Southern California. He was developing water systems, and power systems, and transportation systems. And his lawyers were fellows named Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher. They came to my grandfather and said, "You know more about utility law than the lawyers do. And you've now got a law degree, so why don't you come work for us?"

So, he ended up in that law firm at an early age and he became the senior partner. He managed the firm for many years. He was a good friend of Earl Warren's. My grandfather was the president of the University of California, Berkeley alumni association. And the president of the alumni association serves during that term as a regent for the University of California. After his alumni title passed on to somebody else, he was no longer a regent. So, he wanted Earl Warren to appoint him as a permanent regent. In those days, it was a sixteen-year appointment. And Earl Warren said, "You're a great lawyer and you're really prominent down here in LA. California is starting into this horse racing business. There are a lot of shady characters in that business. We need somebody really honest to be chairman of the racing board. And that's what I want you to do." So, my grandfather—(laughs)—I don't know whether he liked horses or not, but he ended up being chair of that commission.

My mother grew up in a very prominent family in LA. My grandfather married Elise Bonsall. The Bonsalls had come west and ended up with General [Harrison Gray] Otis as the founding treasurer of the *Los Angeles Times*. So, there were a lot of great stories. None of my relatives now live in Los Angeles, but my mother's side of the family—all of her cousins and relatives lived there and they've all

since moved away. But it all started for our family when my father was at Berkeley and my mother was at Berkeley and they met each other.

I was born just before the war started, the bombing of Pearl Harbor. My mother used to tell me stories of blackouts. I think I remember them, but I don't. I was a one-year old. My father was too old to go into the military, but he wanted to be of service to the country. So, right after the war started, he got a job in Washington, D.C. with the War Maritime Commission. And in those days the merchant marine was our navy. We didn't have navy ships to haul people supplies. The ships the navy had were battleships. But as we were trying to help Britain in the war, before we ever got engaged, we had offered to ship supplies to Europe. And those merchant marine ships essentially were being torpedoed by German U boats and people were dying. So, the merchant marine business was a very active, important place to be.

We lived with (this is a great story)—we lived with my dad's brother, Sharon Farr. His brother had married a woman named Janet. And my mother's name was Janet. So we had one house in Chevy Chase. My uncle's wife was the descendent of Senator Sharon. And her husband, my father's brother, was the descendent of Senator Sharon's brother. So they were cousins, distant cousins, but distant enough so that it was legal. We always made a lot of jokes about it, but anyway— So her grandfather had founded Chevy Chase. So they were living in Chevy Chase, and we all lived in one house because housing was short during the war. And both the mothers in the house were named Janet Farr. My aunt then had a baby, who she named Janet.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So, as my mother told the story, we had Upstairs Janet, Downstairs Janet, and Baby Janet. My father tells the story that he took my aunt to the hospital to have her last child because her husband wasn't there. So my father takes her to get admitted. "This is Janet Farr." She came in pregnant. And three weeks later my mother delivers my sister and he shows up again at the hospital (laughs) with a Janet Farr. And the nurses said, "How many wives named Janet Farr do you have?" "Well, that wasn't my wife, the first one—"

So then we moved to New York City, where my father worked for the Port Authority of New York. I don't know how we ended up in Chappaqua. I think he had a friend, Charles Hammond, that lived there, who was vice president of NBC. I was about three or four. I do remember being in our neighbor's farmhouse—Hammond was his name—and Mr. Hammond had a television set. I mean, nobody had ever heard of television, right? It looked like a window that you'd see in a washing machine—a round screen, kind of green-colored—and that was the first television. New York City had the first broadcasts.

It was wonderful, Chappaqua. We were out in the rural area. There was a pond there. It would freeze over in the wintertime and all the kids would go out to play. They'd put us in chairs, with skates on the bottom of the chairs, and just push you all around the pond. My father would commute by train into New York City.

And then, from friends in San Francisco he was told that there were great opportunities for young lawyers to work overseas. So, he found a job in Puerto

Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico was developing housing and developing industry. U.S. residents controlled everything. Even the governor of Puerto Rico was appointed, and was a mainland individual. We lived in Puerto Rico, but there was no housing, so we lived in a hotel there, a wonderful, old hotel called The Normandy, which is now going to be torn down. But it was built by a wealthy couple who had had been on the USS Normandy, and so fell in love with the ship and their experience, that they went back and designed a hotel that looked like the ship, with a hollow center to it. But my mother said that was really tough living for her, because we had two hotel rooms not built with any kitchen or anything. They had to bring in a little burner stove and convert a bathroom into a small kitchen. But they had quite a wild social life in Puerto Rico.

And my father got involved in politics in Puerto Rico, helping the workers understand their rights to organize unions, and also handing out material that would allow them to understand family planning. Well, that's not something that the Puerto Rican government at the time wanted to be done. So, they asked him to leave the island. So, we were there about a year and then—

Reti: You were expelled.

Farr: We were expelled.

Reti: Had your father always been very liberal?

Farr: My mother was more liberal than my father. The story about her father being the only Democrat in the Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher law firm, a big

conservative law firm, is that they would always donate to prominent political candidates for president and governor and everything. And my grandfather, according to the minutes of the meeting, he said, “Whatever amount you give to your Republican candidates, I’m going to take out of my own pocket and give to the Democratic candidates.” So even as the lone wolf Democrat in that law firm, they had so much respect for him that he rose to be senior partner. People just trusted him in LA.

I never knew him very well. I was thinking recently, I’m a grandfather now. How did I relate to my grandparents? I never knew my father’s grandparents at all. They’d all passed away before I was born. But my mother’s grandparents—I knew my grandmother pretty well but my grandfather was always working. We never really had a conversation.

But he ended up being president of the California Club and he ended up building the new club in its now present place, by organizing younger and older members to finally get along and decide how to get this thing done.

He also ended being president of the Los Angeles Municipal Railway, which was the Red Car Line, which was probably one of the finest urban transit systems in the United States, ever. Unfortunately, that was privately developed by Huntington. And Standard Oil came along and wanted to get people out of running public transportation. They wanted them to run buses that ran on gasoline and then get them into cars. So, it was a real corporate battle there and Standard Oil won by subsidizing buses. And the minute the Red Car Line fell apart, which wasn’t really until the late fifties, I think—

Reti: There were remnants of the streetcar system when I was growing up in LA in the early 1960s, a little piece of it.

Farr: Well, I remember using it with my grandparents and parents, particularly in the Pasadena area, when we went out there to Sierra Madre. As kids, those were nothing but orange groves. My cousins—they were a couple of years older and they were urban kids, so they knew how to do urban vandalism much better than us rural kids from Carmel. So, they would tell me, “You go out and you get all these rotten oranges on the ground, that have fallen off the tree. You just get as many—and you build a pile, like a little fort there. A big pile of rotten oranges. And then you just wait for the trains to come by, the Santa Fe, or the Red Car Line. And then you just practice your pitch as fast as you can.”

Reti: Oh, my God. (laughter)

Farr: Hurling these rotten oranges. (laughs) You know, we never realized that maybe they could really hurt people by going through windows and things like that. We just liked to see it all slimed up, yeah. And then if the train slowed down, we’d run like hell. We were always looking forward to going out and doing some vandalism to the Red Car Line.

My mother would bring my grandmother, Elisa Haskins, and her three children up to Carmel for the summer. My mother said it was very interesting because it was a two-day trip and they had a chauffeured car. They’d drive up to Paso Robles the first day and stay in the Paso Robles Inn. That was a big deal. That was your first day. Remember, it was just a two-lane road; it was essentially what we call Highway 101. [When I was] in high school, that was just a two-lane

road, until the freeways got built in the sixties. You essentially went through the main street of every town. You'd go through the main streets of San Luis Obispo, Paso Robles, Santa Barbara and all those towns. And then the second day they would drive up to Carmel. And eventually what my grandfather did was, in about 1940 he'd bought two lots. Before that he had rented a house on Carmelo Street. Just a block down from the house he'd rented, there were two lots for sale. He bought them and had Comstock build a house for him. I think my mother told me that she recalled that he paid \$4000 for two lots and a home on those lots.

Reti: And that's where your family lived?

Farr: So, what happened was we moved back to San Francisco after my father was evicted from Puerto Rico. I went to nursery school. I remember an incident that has interesting cross-cultural interest. My mother said my language, my English, was all Calypso. She said nobody could understand me. She said, "You pronounced Spanish words but it was the hotel employees who would teach you the foulest words in Spanish. You had no idea what they meant. You were using them as a four-year-old kid. I was embarrassed to have people listen to you speak." (laughs)

I remember going to school, and because I was the new kid in the middle of the year, they asked me the first day to get up and say the Pledge of Allegiance. I didn't even know what those words meant. I didn't know what "pledge" was; I didn't know what "allegiance" meant. I was just like, oh, my god. I'm so embarrassed. I'm so humbled. I just remember what an embarrassing moment

that was for me. Of course, I learned it all. And for a guy born on the fourth of July (laughs)—I ended up having a keen interest in flags.

I don't know what triggered moving to Carmel. I think it was the apartment we were in—which was a nice old apartment on a top floor with a beautiful view of San Francisco, on what they called Spaghetti Hill, just above the wharf—I think it was just a month-to-month rental, or year-to-year. We didn't have a lease and somebody bought the building and wanted to live in that apartment, so we had to leave. And I think my mother said, "I don't know what we want to do and your dad is talking maybe he wants to get out of the law firm and open a private practice, or go work for—" It was a time to make some shifts. So she said, "You know what I'll do? I'll just take the kids and take them to Carmel for the summer and live in my dad's house." Because my grandfather, his goal was to retire in Carmel. But he never stopped working until the day he died in LA. He didn't come up here very often. So his house was sitting here. So we moved in. She must have gotten permission from her parents to live there.

My father started commuting on the train because he still had a job in San Francisco. He did that commute on the Del Monte Special. We loved going over to the train station and seeing the engine come in, and all the big smoke and everything, and pick up our dad. He would go up in the morning and come back at night.

Reti: You couldn't do that anymore by train.

Farr: No. That train was built for the Del Monte Hotel. The hotel opened in 1875. The people who stayed at these big fancy hotels often had private parlor cars. It

would be like having your own private plane now. They would just hook them up to the train. Those were all the Crocker's and so on. So they built a track, right? And that's how the hotel was built. It was built on railroad cars. You know what's amazing? The Del Monte Hotel, which is one of the great hotels built in the Western United States in the 1870s, was built in 100 days. They had Chinese coolie laborers. But they had it all done on railroad cars—cutting the wood, and shipping the wood and the nails and everything. It was a big industrial movement, but all the shops and technical support were done right there in front of the hotel.

So anyway, the train ran daily from Monterey to San Francisco and back every day until about 1974, '72, somewhere in there. Then Southern Pacific started abandoning the railroad line. By then we had the Coastal Act and the local park district, using the Coastal Commission and its ability to block the abandonment of the railroad, with the idea that it hadn't gone through proper procedures. And the idea was that we'd like to buy that railroad line and turn it into a scenic trail. So the trail that is from Pacific Grove now out to Marina is the old railroad line, some of which is still in place. My goal since then has been to try to continue that all around Monterey Bay, so that we can have what we call now the National Marine Sanctuary Trail that will go from Davenport to Pacific Grove. We've gotten the northern end. Santa Cruz has been really aggressive about doing it. And Monterey has had the trail here. To complete that—it's expensive; it's time-consuming; it's labor-intensive. And there's no pot of money to just go get. You have to just kind of get help here from nonprofits and from governments, and so on. But I think when we finish that it will be the biggest economic boon to the

entire bay because more people walk that trail between Pacific Grove and Monterey, past the aquarium, than the people that *attend* the aquarium, which is the number one attraction.

Reti: No kidding! Wow.

Farr: It will essentially be an outdoor museum of history. California began around this bay. It will have interpretation of all the cultures that lived here, including the natives, the original natives, back to what this area was like in prehistoric times, the dramatic submarine canyon that was created. It will be an exciting place to go and visit. And it will be so interesting for families, not that you have to go all the way around the bay, which is almost fifty miles, but you can do segments. And it will be so safe for kids to ride and to see these things: the untouched beaches of Fort Ord— Anyway, this is all passing on that historical heritage of people who had the vision of building access to the coast through railroad lines, and now we're trying to capture that, preserve it as access to the coast through feet and non-motorized vehicles.

Fred Farr

So my father came and finally decided he'd like to live here. We had a house here because of my grandfather, so we didn't have to buy one. I always tell people we moved here because we were homeless.

Reti: (chuckles)

Farr: (chuckles) Upper-middle class homeless, right? And then he ended up working for a start-up company in Sand City that had developed this technique

of taking abalone shells and coins and shiny things and embedding them in plastic, and making trays and ashtrays and things like that. They needed a salesman, somebody who knew the Bay Area, and they hired my dad to go up and sell to Gump's [department store] and to sell to the high-end stores in the Bay Area. So he was essentially wearing coveralls to work, and suits to go to San Francisco. But it never economically worked out for him. So he decided, what the heck, I'm going to open up a law practice. He found a little Quonset hut far smaller than the room we're sitting in, and put his shingle out, and was the first attorney in Seaside.

Reti: That's where his office was?

Farr: Yeah, and then he eventually got enough prominence in the legal world here, in the lawyer world— I mean, there were no jobs. Nobody was hiring lawyers in those days.

Reti: What kind of law was he practicing?

Farr: He just did anything that walked in the door.

Reti: A small-town lawyer.

Farr: But he had some really famous cases. In those days, they didn't have a public defender's office. And there was a very awful, gruesome murder down the coast at Bixby Creek Bridge, which ironically now has the plaque that my father was able to get made for the visit of First Lady Bird Johnson, to dedicate Highway 1 as the first state scenic highway in the United States. My father carried the legislation. He and Lady Bird were really good friends.

But before that, at Bixby Creek Bridge—and old-timers remember it—there was actually a neon-signed steakhouse called The Crocodile’s Tail. A strange name. It was hanging over the cliff there, where the little parking lot is.

Reti: I know exactly where that is.

Farr: And the Filipinos lived downstairs, who served the restaurant. One night after drinking, they were playing cards. And somebody charged—(who ended up being my father’s client; my father being their lawyer)—charged him with cheating and pulled a knife on them. And he reached behind him on the bed and there was a .22 rifle, which is not a really deadly rifle. But he must have been an awfully good shot because he shot five people and killed them.^{vi} And then fled the scene by making it look like he jumped over the cliff, leaving some clothes and everything. But they didn’t find any body at the bottom, so they thought this guy is— And many months later they arrested him somewhere in California. He came back here and the district attorney charged him with the death penalty. So they needed lawyers to defend him. And my father, being a young lawyer, they said, “This is your job. You’ve got to do this pro bono.”

My dad was an interesting guy because he would really study—he loved wondering what makes people tick. And he loved stories. This client was Filipino, so he ended up interviewing a lot of Filipinos about the culture, and lifestyle, and the passion of men playing games, gambling games. And he was able to use these—they ended up prominent Filipinos on the Monterey Peninsula—as witnesses for his client. And it was a shocking decision because [the jury] did not give him the death penalty. [My father] saved his life by getting

him life imprisonment without parole. And the client (I wish I could remember his name) served his sentence in San Quentin.

He said, "I want to do something for you. You know I don't have any money. I want to pay you." And my father said, "Well, do you know how to make kites?" He said, "I love making kites." "Would you make a kite for my son?"

So when he went to prison my father visited him a couple of times. And then he wrote him a letter saying, "Can you use prison labor to—I mean, can you make this kite in San Quentin and send it to me?" He said he got back (laughs) a letter from the prison authorities saying: "Addressee unknown." It just sort of disappeared.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I don't know the rest of that story. But my father, from that trial, got really interested in eliminating the death penalty. And when he got elected to the state senate, that was one of his major efforts. [Governor] Pat Brown, who he became very close friends with, had been the district attorney in San Francisco and had that same concern that the death penalty was unfair. But when my father actually had gotten the legislation lined up with the governor's commitment to sign it, there was a very famous murderer on death row in San Quentin, named Caryl Chessman. And whether the governor was going to commute his sentence, became a huge political thing. Pat Brown just couldn't do it, politically. He went to my dad and he said, "I can't sign your bill. If you get it to my desk, I can't sign it this year." What my dad's bill was going to do was not eliminate it, but put a

moratorium on it and allow people to study the issue. But it was all because of that case.

He had a lot of great stories. (laughs) There's another one that I love. If you've read the book *Tortilla Flats*, there's a wonderful character named Peron. Peron was a real person, who Steinbeck knew. He was a kind of vagabond guy who lived in Carmel. My dad got a call one night, in the middle of the night, from Peron, saying, "You've got to help me." My dad said, "Why?" He said, "Well, I'm in jail." My dad said, "Why are you in jail?" He said, "I don't know why I'm in jail." He lived over at the dump, which was behind Monterey Peninsula College, where the freeway is now. And he says, "Oh, man, Juanito—we were just playing some cards and it got cold. And we were drinking some wine. And Juanito wanted my coat, so I gave him my jacket. So we were playing a little more cards and drinking more wine. I got cold and I didn't have my jacket. I asked Juanito to give it back to me. And he wouldn't give it back to me. I needed my coat back. So I cut it off of him."

Reti: (laughs) Oh, no.

Farr: He said, "Can you help me?" So the story is that my father was his lawyer. I don't think it went to trial. But my father wrote a letter to John Steinbeck, who was then living in New York City, saying, "I want you to be a character witness for my client."

Reti: (laughter) I love it!

Farr: And there was a headline in the *Herald*: “Fred Farr Calls Steinbeck—” How could Steinbeck, who made a lot of money off of that book, not come?

Reti: It was poetic justice.

Farr: Poetic justice. (laughter) I think my father was always working out ways for people who got in trouble to find some alternative way. He had tons of stories about his clients.

Education

So he practiced law in Seaside and he helped found the Seaside Rotary Club. And my mother got very active in PTA and the Women’s Democratic Club. My father eventually moved his law practice to Carmel. I went to Sunset School. My sister went to Sunset School. My younger sister went to River School, which had just opened. It was an elementary school in Carmel that I think must have opened in the late fifties or early sixties. And then both of my sisters went to Santa Catalina School.

I loved Carmel High School. I loved the co-ed, the size of it. I wasn’t really very academically motivated. I’m dyslexic and I really had a hard time in school, in elementary school especially.

Reti: I have questions about that. Let’s go back to that before we jump to college. So you were interested in biology in high school?

Farr: Well, it was very interesting. I didn’t know— Nobody had diagnosed me as dyslexic. Nobody even used that word. But my mother said the teacher was

saying, “Your son has a really hard time reading.” First of all, they make you read in front of the class. And you’d get to the simplest words, like *the* and *and*, and you’d blow it. And you knew you were going to blow it. I mean, I just hated the anxiety of knowing I was up next. And then they’d try to teach you to spell, and they’d ask you to go to the front of the room and spell words. It didn’t matter if I knew how to spell them. Just the anxiety of having to go up in front of the class would just—blank—I’d have a blank. I couldn’t tell you what my name was. I started cutting school as I got into third grade, fourth grade. My mother said, “There must be a spelling bee today. Because immediately you get sick. You’re all right in the afternoon.” She figured it out.

She kept having me go have tests, essentially IQ tests or other kinds of tests, to see if there were any developmental disabilities. And all they just said was that Sammy had a hard time reading. So when I got to high school, they assigned me to speed reading classes. That was the only thing you had as a remedy for not being a good reader or speller. So they’d teach you to read really fast and see if you remembered any of it. But it had really nothing to do with fixing the problem.

Reti: No.

Farr: And I’m sure it was mild. So in school, I hated English classes. I loved the teachers. I mean, the only way I got through them was the teachers were just so phenomenal. But there was a biology teacher named Enid Larson, and she was a really famous in Carmel and the schools, mainly famous because she was so damn good and a progressive teacher. But the school board let her go. And the

students just were outraged. That happened when I was in college, I think. She'd done her work studying ground squirrels. And she ended up in the Owens Valley, living in a remote, reclusive area, doing her chipmunk study. And she was able to use her chipmunk study to stop the flooding of Owens Valley, stop the Los Angeles Water Works.^{vi} And the last time—I remember I was married and came home from a trip with my wife, and I was staying at my in-laws' house. And I picked up a *National Geographic* and there was an article about Enid Larson, my high school teacher, my idol, my mentor. I called her and I just said, "If it weren't for you, I don't know what I would have done because you really set my vision on going to college and being a science teacher." You know, when I look back on it, [my interest in] science started in the sixth grade, when a teacher told me that I was the first one to learn the order of the planets. He was asking the question and I raised my hand, and I started making a mobile of the planets and the sun. The sun and all that. He said, "You know, you're my best student in this subject." I'd never been good at anything in grammar school. I said (laughs), "Well, what's this subject?" "Well, we call it science." I said, "Well, I'm going to study science." And when I look back at it, you know what science is? It's memorization.

It's not writing. It's not writing! You end up, in biology, learning all the parts of animals and bodies and flora and fauna, names and all that stuff. I loved that. I was in Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts and all that. Out-of-doors, I excelled. I loved it! It was just the reading and the writing was the tough part.

So when I went away to college, I became a biology major. That was pre-med. Everybody who was in pre-med did—there was just one set of courses. You all

took the same courses. And then I thought, well, maybe I'll be a veterinarian. I loved animals, loved the out-of-doors. And I went to a college that was the size of Carmel High School, actually a little bit bigger.

Reti: That was Willamette.

Farr: Yeah, it was interesting. Because I wasn't really curious about going to college. I didn't think about it. I remember my high school counselor saying, "Well, you're in your senior year. What are you going to do next year? You have options. You can go to community college at Monterey Peninsula College. You can go to San Jose State, if you want to go a four-year college, or anywhere else in the country that you get into. You can go into the military. Or you can go to work." I said, "Well, everybody in my family, my parents and grandparents, have gone to college, so I'm going to go to college." He said, "Well, what kind of college would you like to go to?" I said, "Oh, probably one that's co-ed, small. But it's got to be close to skiing." I loved athletics, but I wasn't a star at anything. I was on all the teams and I lettered and everything, but I wasn't a star at anything. But when I started skiing, I was the only one that was skiing. So all of a sudden I had something that—(laughs)—I was better than anyone else at, sort of the first at. So I said, "I want to go to a college that's near ski slopes, mountains."

And then Willamette came through. A lot of the small liberal arts colleges came through the high schools in those days to recruit students. The counselor called me in and he said, "I think this might be a school that you would be interested in." So I sat down with the recruiter and had a wonderful conversation, telling me all about this school in Oregon. And then after he left, the counselor said,

“You know, the school wants you to be a student.” I hadn’t applied or anything. They just said that. I said, “Well, that’s cool. Then I’ll go there.” He said, “Well, you have to take the SAT test.” I said, (laughs) “What are those?” I had to take them. But I was already accepted.

So what I ended up doing was applying to a whole bunch of small liberal arts colleges. But also, because of this interest in veterinary science, I applied to UC Davis. So I thought, you know, that’s where I really want to go. But my grades didn’t get me in, until just before I left for Willamette, I got an invitation to be at Davis. I was what you call a provisional, or whatever it is: “We have openings and you can come, but you’re going to have to take bonehead English and all that.”

But I had already been accepted at Willamette. I had gone up and visited and it was a beautiful campus. And it was closer to skiing than Davis. So that’s where I went. Then all the time there, I was wishing I had not left California. But by the time I was a senior at Willamette, I really started appreciating rural Oregon and rural character. I was studying a lot of sociology too. It was just sort of the cultures of these states. California was essentially into surfing. We were all California surfers, blond guys with tans.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And blond girlfriends and all that. And all the Oregonians were more church-going, isolationist, not really interested in the world and politics. Pretty conservative. But the capitol, Oregon’s capitol, was right across the street from Willamette, in Salem. It was a great campus. So I stayed there.

Reti: So you weren't interested in a career in politics when you were young. It doesn't sound like that was part of your goal.

Farr: No, I didn't think I was qualified. My father took me places. Like when he really got interested in criminal justice issues—he was on the Judiciary Committee in the State Legislature and they were building the state prison system, and they were reforming a lot of the jails—when we'd go places like Los Angeles to visit my grandparents, he'd go down to the Los Angeles City Jail and want to interview the wardens and managers, and the inmates, about life in prison and opportunities afterwards. And he'd drag me along. And I always thought, I want to see all these bad guys. I'd seen them in the movies. I wanted to see what they were really like.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And I remember these jails (laughs), particularly in the Atascadero State Hospital, the mental hospital for the criminally insane. I said, my God, they're just like normal people! In fact, my father was saying, "Yeah, they wanted to know whether I was one of them. They're not always everyday normal." I ended up in a course in Willamette, in a psychology class, where they required you to go out to the state mental hospital and to be a social worker there, just playing ping pong or cards and talking to the patients. That's the hospital where they filmed *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Reti: No kidding.

Farr: I was there in that era. And it was very interesting because I learned—I'd meet these patients and I couldn't understand: Why are you in here? And then you'd go back a week later and they were just (makes incoherent sounds) out of it. And you saw, yes, people with mental issues can be as normal as anybody, and then there are moments when they're not normal, and you need treatment. It was incredible, experiential learning. I look back at most of my life and the things that I really enjoyed doing were all—whether it was outdoors or whatever—it was experiential learning. That's what dyslexia—I never got interested in reading a lot of books. Really, I'd rather *do* it.

Reti: So you spent a lot of time outside as a kid.

Growing up in Carmel, California

Farr: Oh, yeah. I mean, in those days—I long for those days for parents and for my grandchildren. We lived—in Carmel and in any town along here on the coast, probably anywhere in California—every aspect of society lived in that town. So from the lowest income jobs—whatever they might be, housecleaning, gardening—those people—taxi drivers, whatever it may be—lived in that town. And you went to school with their kids and played with them. They lived next door; they lived down the street. I remember all the Filipinos that worked in the Pine Inn and were the waiters and the caregivers. I dated one of the daughters. She was one of my first girlfriends. I loved that community. But they were all in there in Carmel.

So what happened, to answer your question, is that this lifestyle was very communal. Kids would just leave the house in the morning; you'd walk to

school, no matter how far it was. You'd walk all the way up to Carmel High School from the beach, until you got older, and then the upper-classmen who got driver's licenses would offer to drive you.

But that was a time when the kids would leave the house in the morning and they wouldn't tell their parents where they'd go after school. Parents just knew that you'd either come home, or you'd go play at somebody else's house. And if you weren't home by dinnertime, and it was starting to get dark, moms would get on the phone and start calling the other moms and say, "You got my kid?" "Oh, yeah. Sammy's here and maybe we'll just keep him for dinner tonight. Maybe he'll stay over, or we'll bring him home." You never told your parents where you were. And nobody worried because everything was okay. And we did a lot of crazy things, a lot of mischief, you know. Going down to the beach, young kids, nobody is supervising us. Swimming without wetsuits. Nobody had wetsuits. And you'd go out and there's undertows. People got—fortunately nobody—the first time anybody got killed was when one of our classmates got a driver's license and went through Pebble Beach and hit a tree. And it was just so shocking that people die from accidents. We didn't ever think it would happen to us.

It was such a wonderful growing-up experience. Nobody locked their cars, locked their houses. There was no fear. And it's interesting how much fear has been taught or sold [today]. You've got to defend yourself. You've got to have locks and you've got to not trust things. And now, even with electronics, people busting in and snooping on your private mail and calls, whatever, cell phones. It's amazing how our society has matured into one that is living every day with a

huge fear factor, whether it's Islamic terrorists, or— In those days, I'm sure there were kidnappers and molesters, but they weren't part of the news. You never thought it was going to be around here.

So it was a wonderful, wonderful childhood. I graduated from Carmel High School in 1959. Our class was so solid. In 2019, we will have our sixtieth high school reunion. We are still a really tight class.

Reti: About how many people were in your class?

Farr: There were a little over a hundred. There were four hundred in Carmel High School. We were the largest class. Each class had more students. At the time we were in high school, Carmel was the football champions. We were winning all the sports. We were on those teams. We were never defeated. The school had a beautiful campus. There was a lot of pride in the town and in the school. The school was so much a part of the culture of Carmel. Every weekend there were parades with the students, with the fire engines, for the football games, and cheerleaders. The town was full of children, and kite festivals, and music festivals, and Halloween costume festivals. Selling of the local *Pine Cone* newspaper on the corner every Friday. All the kids would run up to the newspaper office and get ten papers and go out and sell them and you'd make fifty cents or something. That was a lot of money. You could go to a movie and then some.

I long for those days because I think what's happening here is we're losing the sense of community, with our price of housing. No young families can live in

these cities anymore. And you just don't have that tie-in with the schools, which were so much a part of the community.

Reti: Mm, hmm. Were there parks, or other natural areas that were your favorite, besides the beach?

Farr: Well, it's interesting, because Mom, with all these families that had kids— Mom organized this thing she named the American Picnic Society. My mom loved the out-of-doors during the day. As the sun went down, she wanted her martini. She wanted to be in her own bed at night. She did not like camping.

Reti: No camping.

Farr: (laughs) No camping. But boy, was she—in her coveralls and in her garden all day, and going to beaches, and reading books everywhere, and going to seminars. So I remember—she used to get on the phone on Saturday morning and call the other moms and say, “Where is the American Picnic Society meeting today?” They sort of had four spots. These were the extremes, right? Because beyond that was wilderness. It was Schulte Road in Carmel Valley, which is just a little way up the valley. At Schulte Road, there was a big swimming hole with a big rope over it. And for twenty-five cents you could park your car in the grass lot there and go to the river. It was all privately owned. Nothing organized. But there were picnic spots and kids would all go play and swim in this big swimming hole. That was one spot. The other was Yankee Point, which is now all privately locked off. But in the Carmel Highlands, there's this wonderful beach at Yankee Point. There were no houses, nothing there. The Highlands Inn

was there, but this was just past the Highlands Inn. That was the end of the world. And nobody would ever think about going to Big Sur.

Reti: No?

Farr: Oh, no! It was just way too far. And the other was Carmel River Beach, which we called Simpson's Beach. And sometimes at the foot of 13th Avenue, that's where a lot of the birthday parties were held. Ocean Avenue was more for the tourists, at that end. But at the southern end of the beach, there was a little cove there, and it was really great for picnics and barbeques. And at night, we'd have bonfires there.

And then interesting—getting into Pebble Beach—most locals could get in without paying any fee—before the Spanish Bay hotel was built, that used to be a big industrial sand mining area. In fact, the railroad tracks went all the way to that spot. Del Monte Glass was created out of that because the sand was pure white, really fine sand, made phenomenal glass. But the sand dunes in there were just huge, and they were bare. You'd go in there and drive on this dirt road and find this huge, gigantic sand dune. So those were the options for the American Picnic Society.

Oh, the other thing that was a big thing for kids in Carmel was for anybody who needed orthodontic work, there was only one doctor. He was a Santa Cruz doctor named Dr. Showalter. He had an office in Carmel in the Doud Arcade. So you'd go there for check-ups. If you had to have your fittings, or tightenings, or any major work done on your braces, you'd have to go to his office in Santa Cruz. That was usually a weekend Saturday trip. So there would be carpooling

because there'd be a lot of kids that needed this. A couple of moms would drive us up to Santa Cruz. We'd go there in the morning for the appointment and then in the afternoon we'd all get to go to the Boardwalk. You could bear the pain of braces as long as you got the treat of the Boardwalk. Those were wonderful days of outdoor living and trust and support.

Reti: Okay. So let's take you forward a little bit. You graduated from high school; you were at Willamette. You graduated. What came next after college?

John F. Kennedy

Farr: Well, it was interesting. This was the beginning of the sixties. John F. Kennedy was elected president of the United States. So here we are, freshmen in college. You couldn't vote until you were twenty-one, so college students mostly weren't voting. But I came out of a political family—I was telling my wife last night that I remember the 1956 convention. We were on the beaches in Southern California. Kids my age—and we were fourteen, fifteen years old—we left the beach to go into the house to watch on black and white television, the Democratic convention. We were really excited. I mean, this was a big thing. There was no competition, no other TV shows. Nothing was more important than these presidential nominations every four years. The interior of the conventions and the excitement hasn't changed much. But the interest—that was the thing. It was like the Olympics, or some things that just come along rarely. Superbowls. You had to watch it. Senator Estes Kefauver wore a coonskin hat and we'd all studied Davy Crockett. So we thought, oh, it's Davy Crockett for president.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And then the young Kennedy was so articulate, and so handsome, and had a sense of humor. So Kennedy's election was a big thing for our generation. I remember being in school at Willamette in that election, so excited about him being elected president.

And there was a funny story, because that summer of my first year of college I came home and I got a job with the Forest Service as a seasonal employee, a firefighter, what we call a wildland firefighter. We were housed over at Arroyo Seco in Monterey County, where we lived in the barracks, the firefighters, all guys. The way it works is that you have two days off a week. But one day is what they call standby. You couldn't leave the job site. You didn't have to do anything. You didn't have to work. You just read books or went fishing. But you had to be right within calling distance in case you ever had to go on a fire. But the other day would be the day that you could go home; you could go off and leave the spot.

So my father called me and he said, "You know, this summer in Los Angeles there's the Democratic convention and the candidates are starting to come through here." My father was in the state senate and he had organized for Adlai Stevenson, who was running again. He had lost in 1956 and was running again as a candidate in '60. My dad was head of the Democrats for Stevenson. So he called me and he said, "You know, it's very interesting. They don't know whether Stevenson is going to get enough votes to be nominated. And so, other candidates are coming to me and asking if I would maybe vote for them on the

second ballot. One of them is this young senator from Massachusetts named John F. Kennedy. He and his wife actually were here for their honeymoon at Cypress Point. They're coming this Tuesday. And that's your day off. Wouldn't you like to come home and come to lunch with the senator and his wife? You know, he's not my choice, but he might be the next president of the United States." I said, "Dad, you want me to give up a day that I'm going fishing to go meet a politician?"

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I said, "You've introduced me to enough politicians. I'm going fishing." So, to this day, there's a wonderful photograph of my father and my sister with John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy taken over there. And everybody says, "Well, why aren't you in that picture?" Because I went fishing. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs) Aw.

Farr: But that was essentially my introduction to Kennedy, and when he got elected president I was probably his biggest supporter.

I'm in college. I'm a biology major. I think I'm going to come back to Carmel High School and be a biology teacher there. But I just didn't feel I was mature enough. I wasn't ready. I'd had lots of adventures. I'd worked for the Forest Service. I'd worked as a merchant marine. The summer before I'd worked for a cousin who had a Johnson Wax franchise in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I worked in that factory between my junior and senior year, and I fell in love with this cross-cultural experience. I bought a ticket all the way to Buenos Aires and back,



PEACE CORPS - BARRIO CASTILLA - MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA 1965

"Sam Farr from his Time as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia" (1965). Photographs. 19.
https://digitalcommons.csUMB.edu/samfarr_photos_all/19

stopping in every capital city in Latin America, including coming home from Brazil and Rio, and up through the Caribbean, back to the hotel that my mother and father had lived in with me when I was a young kid in Puerto Rico.

Peace Corps in Colombia

So I'm graduating from college and then Kennedy announces the Peace Corps. And I just—that is it! That's it. I guess you would call them gap years now. What are we going to do? I got *so* excited about that. So I applied. And I applied for Colombia, because when I had traveled down to Buenos Aires. Bogota, Colombia was my favorite city that I was in. It was green and beautiful. It reminded me of Oz because the stone of Colombia is an emerald. And this really was an emerald city. (laughs) I said, I want to go back to Colombia. So I put it on my application as my first choice.

Reti: Bogotá?

Farr: Yeah, Bogotá. And, of course, when I got invited to the Peace Corps and people asked me where I was going, I said, "Well, I'm going to Bo-gata, [pronounced with American accent] Colombia. Bog-gata, Colombia. (chuckles) I didn't speak a word of Spanish, even though I'd spent a summer in Argentina. I couldn't speak with the workers at all. But you know, when you're all doing the same kind of jobs together, just working side-by-side, you end up communicating in so many different ways. And usually it's with a lot of laughter and jokes. So I always knew that, boy, I would love to learn another language

and really immerse myself in another culture. The Peace Corps allowed me to do that. That was life changing.

Because, you know what I think [now]? I never thought about it at the time, but with this embarrassment of being—pride and embarrassment—because I loved my dad. He was a great dad. I mean, he would sacrifice everything to be at every father-son event. I had no idea that he had to drive all the way from Sacramento on non-freeway roads, in the middle of rainstorms in the winters, to get down here to be at an event, to be my dad. He was wonderful. But I was always afraid that—“Oh, your father is a senator. You’re some kid with a silver spoon in your mouth and you get all the privileges.” I didn’t get any of that. But I thought people thought that.

And when I got in the Peace Corps I realized, (laughs) nobody here knows anything about my family, my father. Anything. They don’t know anything about it. I am just Sam, the *Corpista*, as they called us. A Peace Corps volunteer. Or they called us “*Hijos de Kennedy*,” because Kennedy invented the Peace Corps, and he’d been in Colombia, and his wife had spoken in Spanish in Bogotá. In fact, the airport in Bogotá was named—can you imagine a foreign country naming an airport after an American president [now] after his assassination? I was there the year after his assassination. So I went to the anniversary of his assassination in a cathedral in Medellín and I was just shocked. The cathedral was just packed with people, people who had never seen him, couldn’t understand a word he said. But he was an image to them. And in all the houses that I visited that could afford to get a photograph: there would always be the

Pope—there'd be a cross on the wall and the Pope next to it—and a picture of Kennedy.

So the Peace Corps became nicknamed down there as the Sons of Kennedy. So *Hijos de Kennedy*. But that was life changing for me. I found my own identity, and found my self-esteem, and found my passion for trying to eliminate the root causes of poverty, now really understanding what those causes were. It's so fundamental to me. You know, it galls me that people say, "Well, you know. They have all the opportunity in the world, so they ought to just pull themselves up by their bootstraps. It's their own fault that they're poor." People have no idea how stupid, how ignorant that statement is. Because in poverty you don't have choices. You don't even grow up with the thought of choices. And, to this day, if you go around to poverty areas and you ask kids what they want to be when they grow up, they'll just look at you with a blank stare. "I've never been asked that question. I've never had that thought. I don't know what you're talking about." And you'll talk to Peace Corps volunteers and they'll say—particularly in trying to empower women—I talked to some Panamanian volunteers recently and the women were saying, "You know, in our barrios, these girls—we have to start getting them interested in thinking about something other than at thirteen just having babies. Because when you ask them what they want to be when they grow up, they look at you with a blank stare, like, 'I don't know what you're asking me. I don't know what you're talking about. I'm going to be like my mom.'" "Well, your mom started having babies at thirteen and she had to stop school, or maybe didn't get to third grade. Would you like to be a teacher like me, or a nurse? (you know, those things that probably girls all over

the world, or guys—firemen or whatever those things that kids always say.) Or nurses?” And their eyes light up. And you say, “You could do that. But you’re going to have to stay in school a little bit longer. And you’re a good student. You can do this. You’re my student. You’re very good. And I’ll help you. But you’re going to have to make a choice.” That’s when we implant in their minds that when you’re thirteen you’re not going to start having babies. Stay in school in a little bit longer.

What I noticed in the barrio is that people don’t have choices. They don’t have a choice about what kind of clothes they wear. Their wardrobe is very limited. So you wear the same clothes every day and you save that wonderful thing, your favorite, for a feast day, or a birthday, or Christmas. You don’t have choices about what you’re going to eat because it’s the same stuff every day. And it’s really hard to get access to it. And other things are—you haven’t tasted them, so you’re not going to like them. So you’re not even curious.

So the idea that people in poverty have choices is just nonsensical. They don’t have choices. And you have to empower them to understand that maybe there are options. But it’s got to be somebody helping them. It’s not going to just come from the culture. Because they don’t have any money anyway. And they don’t have an education, so they’re not going to be able to get a job. So it’s just a perpetuation of a culture of poverty. And that’s what I discovered you can break with just a little bit of community organization, building up self-esteem and confidence that you do have choices. And what are you those? What are your dreams? The Peace Corps taught me well.

The irony is that last night at the Republican Convention, Dr. [Ben] Carson was criticizing Saul Alinsky. Saul Alinsky wrote the book that the U.S. government used to teach us how to do community organizing. I became a fan of it because it made so much common sense. And then I found out that Saul Alinsky died of a heart attack on the streets of Carmel and that he had a house here.

Reti: Huh. I never knew that.

Farr: And I love community organizing because I really think that's the ultimate empowerment. In fact, my reason for being in politics today, and always for getting into politics, was to use my knowledge of how to empower people. So the concept was, okay, I have my political values and beliefs. I think they're right. But what if something happens to me? I'm traveling all the time. What if I get smacked in an auto accident, or a plane crashes on the way to Washington? I'd hate to see somebody with an opposite opinion just be able to go in there and ruin everything that my philosophy has created. So my idea, always, in politics was to use this to pass on to other people the way to get there, and to get around roadblocks. I think that's what my life has been about, is removing roadblocks, or getting around them. And it was interesting because I was taught by the poorest people how to look at things a different way.

And it goes back to this community organizing, because the Peace Corps had said, "Look, you're going there with American values. You don't even know what your own cultural values are because you've never discussed them. You don't think of it. We can assure you that Americans are hung up on cleanliness. That is not necessarily the highest value for people that are living in poverty. So

you're going to be living in situations where there's going to be garbage right outside your door. There's going to be open sewers, if sewers at all. Toilets are not going to be flush toilets. You're going to have these cultural shocks. And don't just think that the first thing they need to do is clean up the health of the barrio because that's not what maybe they want to do."

So that was going on in my mind as I was living with this stuff. Boy, it was all true. You had a hole in the floor with the toilet. No water. There were no sewers. It just went out in the street. It wasn't even a street. It was a mud area. But it rained a lot and the rain took care of the stuff and washed it away. But garbage. Garbage wasn't what I thought it was because anything that is edible the vultures eat. And anything that is glass or tin, like a little tinny bottle (there was no plastic in those days)—the kids would go through and take it. Those would become their toys. So it was recycling like you never knew it. Those little piles of garbage outside your house would be gone. There wasn't so much use of plastics yet and all those other things that have added some permanent damage.

But what was fascinating was I worked with the junta, which is the neighborhood association, which was, I guess, similar to what we know as a homeowner's association, and asked them what did they want to do? They needed everything. They had no schools. They had no education; no health clinics; no sewers; had no streets; no water. I mean, all these things that are just so fundamental. They wanted to build a soccer field. I was thinking in my head, this was the ultimate. (laughs) Okay, Farr. You're really into it now. You've never played soccer in your life. You're a football player. You know how long a football field is and how wide a football field is and that you put these ten-yard

stripes on the field. But how big is a soccer field? (laughs) I said, I can't tell them that. I can't tell them because they expect me as a gringo to know everything.

So it was, [cheerleader voice] "Okay! Let's build a soccer field. Where are we going to build it? Where do you want to build it?" "Well, there's this field down here." "Well, let's go down and take a look at it." I was thinking, what am I supposed to do here? And I realized, I'm just an organizer. I'm just a cheerleader. Nobody had ever organized them. It was a really incredible moment because I said, "You want to build it here? Look at these boulders!" "Don't worry. We can take care of those." They said, "Okay, we're going to build it here." (I didn't check the title to the land. I didn't know whose it was.) I said, "Let's just do it. Let's build a soccer field. We'll clean it all up." So I said, "We've got to have shovels and rakes." "Oh, yeah. This guy has a shovel. We can borrow it or get him. And I know somebody who has a rake." So we said, "Let's do it on a Saturday."

So everybody shows up, and the moms come out with empanadas, and they bring some radios, and there's some music, and the kids are all watching and wanting to help. We're pulling weeds and raking and everything. And we get to these boulders that are about the size of this gigantic table in this conference room.

I said, "Well, we ought to bulldoze these." They said, "Bull-what? What's that?" "Well, we got to get this big, gigantic machine in here to move these rocks." They said, "No, no, Samuel. We'll get rid of these rocks." I said, "Well, how can you do that? We can't dig this rock out."

And they all disappear and they come back and they have all this rusty old wire and stuff. They start wrapping the rock like a mummy. (laughs) They wrap it with this wire. And then they bring some old tires and just anything that will burn, old cloth. When you think about (laughs) the toxic smoke— And then they find gasoline and they pour it all over the tires. And they light this thing up and this fire goes. And it's burning and it's smoky and it's smoldering and everything. And they said, "Mañana, we'll come back."

And they come back the next day with a bucket of water. And this rock is now really hot. They throw this cold water on the rock and it all splits.

Reti: Oh, wow!

Farr: They said, "That's our bulldozer." (chuckles) Wow! With all the ingenuity of a gringo, I never would have thought of that.

Reti: And then it was in much smaller pieces and they could take it—

Farr: Yeah, they could take it all away. So we built a kind of very crude soccer field. But what it was, was the community had done something, and they could look at it and say, "Maybe we can do things."

Reti: It was a start.

Farr: "So what do you want to do next?" "Oh, we need a school."

The Peace Corps had a wonderful machine invented by a volunteer, called a Cinveram, which essentially put dirt, adobe dirt—you just put it in there with a little bit of cement, mix it all dry and just pour a tiny bit of water in it. And you

put it in this sort of thing like a big large brick. And then you pull the handle and it just presses it all together. And then you left it out and let it sit. It's an adobe brickmaking—but it's one brick at a time. And to build a school, a little school about the size of this room, it took us almost a year of everybody in the neighborhood working on building the bricks and letting them dry.

Reti: One brick at a time.

Farr: And then we built the school. The room was probably good for ten students. Four hundred showed up, from pre-school to high school age. With pesos in their hands to pay the teacher. We didn't go through any public school system or anything. We just did this. It didn't survive because we made a lot of mistakes in not getting it integrated.

But the point is, I really learned about how to listen. In politics, people say, "What is most important?" I say, "You've got to be a good listener. You make your living talking. But you can't do your work unless you listen to the felt needs of your constituents, which I learned from the barrio in Colombia."

Two Tragedies

And then we had a really tragic event—my mother was being treated for cancer. I came home to my barrio one morning and the Peace Corps officials came to my door. I knew my mother was ill. She came to my college graduation and she said, "I'm going into the hospital when you go into training. I don't want you to worry about it. You know, women my age just have to go get things fixed. It's a plumbing matter." That's what she told me. So my father calls me in training and

he says, "Your mother didn't want to worry you at all but she's had a very serious operation. She has a thing called cancer." I said, "Well, that sounds awful." He said, "Oh, you know, modern medicine is fantastic. They operated on her and she's going to be all right. She has to go through chemotherapy and she has to go to San Francisco to do that. But she's going to be okay. So don't worry."

Well, we wrote and I sent Wollensak tapes back and forth to my parents. But one day the Peace Corps comes to my door and hands me my passport and ticket and says, "You've got to get on a plane today. We've made all the arrangements. You're going home because your mother is dying."

Reti: Oh, my god, Sam.

Farr: "She's dying? They never told me that."

So I—was just wondering whether she was still alive because communication was so difficult. I had no idea when I got on that plane whether I would ever see her again. And I finally arrived in Monterey and my dad takes me up to the hospital. Mom was so excited to see me. I spent every night with her. And then the Peace Corps said, "Two weeks. You have got to either leave the Peace Corps or return here." And my mother just—she said, "You've got to go. This is the best thing you've ever done. It's great for you. I'm so proud of you. I'd do it myself if I was healthier. And I want to come see you. So you go back. Don't worry about me."

That was a Friday morning that I left. And Sunday morning my father actually called me in Medellín. He got ahold of me and said, "Your mom died the day

after you left. But don't come home. I'll come see you. I'm in session in the State Legislature now, but when I have a break I'll come see you."

So I was just—wow, this doesn't happen to our family. We never—I told you the lifestyle we grew up in. Nobody feared anything. I never even feared her having cancer because everybody said, "Oh, she's going to be all right." I figured, you get broken; you get fixed. So realizing, my mom actually died. Having to accept that—it was really difficult, especially being so far away from home, family and friends—some depression sets in.

And a month later—that was January—in February I'm in my barrio. It's really hard to find my house. There's no road there, just a trail. I'm reading *Time* magazine. It was the biggest and best news from home magazine. We'd race down to the town every month to get *Time* magazine. That was the news. I mean, we'd fight among ourselves over one copy.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: The minute you put it down, your partner would grab it and start reading it. (laughs) So I'm reading it, because my partner wasn't there and I thought, I have some moment of quiet here and I can read *Time* magazine. And I hear this knocking on my door, which wasn't unusual because the kids would always come and tease us, you know—go knock on the gringo's door. So he knocked on the door and I said, "Quien es?" (Who is it?) And he said, "Señor Farr, quiero usar su latrina." And I said, well, that's a foreign accent voice. And *latrina*? It means latrine. That's not what people usually say when they want to use your bathroom. They say baño.

I said, “Quien es?” He said, “Señor Farr, quiero usar su latrina,” and knocked on the door. I said, who the heck is this? I open the door, and oh, my God! (laughs) My father is standing there in my barrio dressed in a Colombian hat and a Colombian ruana [poncho].

Reti: (laughter)

Farr: And it was like, “How did you find—” (laughing) “What are you doing here?” You know. I was shocked. Well, when I first got to Colombia, I’d met a Colombian family whose son was just phenomenal. He was coming back to finish his senior year at Santa Clara [University]. And I’d written my father, “You’ve got to invite Alfonso down to talk to Mom about Colombia and Medellín. He’s been in my barrio.” My father just loved him. Alfonso was a fascinating guy. Well, what happened was my father called up Alfonso and said, “I want to go to Colombia.” And his family was a very prominent family. They picked up my father at the airport and said, “You’re going to stay in our house. You’re not going to live in that barrio.” He said, “Well, I’m going to stay with my son.” (laughs) My father said, after one night in the barrio, “Do you mind if I move to the Ospina house?” I said, “It’s okay. I never expected you to sleep here for a week.”

But he fell in love with Medellín: the people, the families. And he told me when he left, he said, “You know, I’ve got to get your sisters down here just to see what you’re doing in this beautiful city and the wonderful people.”

So what happened was my father was going back to Sacramento and so my younger sister—I have two sisters. Franny is a year younger and Nancy was

seven years younger. And Franny was away at college. So my father and my younger sister, Nancy, were living in the house [in Carmel] after my mother died. And there was nobody there [when Fred Farr was in the legislature in Sacramento]. So my father put Nancy over at Santa Catalina School as a boarder. And then that summer, Milton and Jane Mayer of Carmel were going to Europe to do a study abroad, and they offered to take Nancy with them. So she went to Europe. She was my younger sister and I didn't know she could even cope with the big, outside world. She flew from Madrid, Spain to Medellín all by herself. I met her in the airport in Medellín. And then my father arrives with my other sister, Francesca, and with Alfonso, because he was coming home for the summer. So we had a wonderful week together in Medellín.

And then Alfonso invited our family out to their big cattle ranch hacienda in Northern Colombia in the Department of Córdoba. They had big cattle ranches. That was how the family made their living. I traveled during the summer, so I said, "I can't take time off." So my father takes my two sisters and my cousins, who had also come to Medellín, and they go up to this big cattle ranch and they all set out to go riding on Sunday morning. The horses were all brought in and my sister got on a horse. She'd actually been riding with me in the mountains around Medellín the week before. But somehow on this horse, she was a bad fit, because it took off and she dropped the reins. I don't think she'd done that much riding anyway. But the horse was galloping just as fast as it can go. And it knocks her off. She falls. A bad fall.

And although she was conscious, according to my father, he really wanted to have her X-rayed because it was such a bad fall and she said how much her head

hurt. They took all day to figure out how to get her into the small capital city of Monteria, where they had a hospital, because the road was so rough they couldn't take her by jeep or by truck. So they took her on the river, which was a meandering river. They got a dugout canoe and they put a hammock in it and took her down and carried her into the hospital. And they X-rayed her there. She was conscious all the time. And the doctor said, "You know, she has no fractures. She's just got a concussion. Why don't you just leave her here overnight and come pick her up in the morning?"

So my dad—I wasn't there yet—so my dad says okay. And they go back in the morning, which was a Monday morning. And the doctor and nurse are there and whatever other hospital people. And they said, "We have some really bad news. This injury is acute. She needs neurosurgery."

Reti: Oh, gosh.

Farr: "And we have no neurosurgeons in the region and she can't be moved. So the only way you're going to save her life is if you get a neurosurgeon to fly in."

Well, here we are in a foreign country. So my dad had the wherewithal. He calls me in Medellín. He says, "Do you know any neurosurgeons?" I said, "Yeah, I know the head of the medical school." He said, "Call them right away and tell them what this emergency is. I'm calling the ambassador in Bogotá." And the ambassador in Bogotá—my father being in politics and everything—was very good to my dad. They arranged with the American embassy to find a neurosurgeon in Bogotá who had been trained at Columbia University in New York, and they arranged for a private aircraft to fly him into this little tiny town.

But they got to the airport and they were barred from flying because the tiny airport didn't have any lights.

Reti: (sharp intake of breath) Oh.

Farr: And we went to the airport in Medellín, and the same thing. They barred us from leaving in a plane to get there. So we had to drive by surface car. I went with the doctor and his chauffeur. We drove all night and arrived in the hospital about 4:00 in the morning, where the Bogotá surgeon had—had come in—the American embassy had found out that the American navy had a plane stationed at the embassy, a PBY, a small, two-engine plane. And the navy said, “We’ll fly out to that airport if they’ll light up the runway.” So this town, Monteria, just went on the radio and woke up everybody in town and they said, “Come on down to the airport and bring gasoline.” You know, it was a big thing for a small town. Everybody shows up at the runway and the plane lands. And the whole town [with the hospital] by then wakens and says, “What’s going on?” “Well, there’s a *gringa* in the hospital and she’s dying.” So the whole town, without even knowing anything said, “We’re going to go there and we’re going to pray for her soul, and pray for her health.” They set up a candle vigil outside the hospital, hundreds of people, all night long.

And I’m arriving, in just total fear of what’s going on. The doctors get in and they’re working all night. The reports were she’s going to be okay. And then about 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning the doctors walk out, and you could just tell by the look on their face that things weren’t going well. And they just said, “She’s not going to make it. It’s too late.”

I've never, ever had such a horrible moment in my life. Blaming myself. If I hadn't come in the Peace Corps; if I hadn't done this, did that. My dad and my sister were just in total shock. This can't happen to us. I mean, it can't happen. You can't lose another family member. No, No, No.

Reti: Your mom had just died.

Farr: I mean, we were the family that nothing ever happened to. And here we've lost Mom and now we're losing Nancy. And we're in a foreign country. It's not true. This is some big, made-up story. And of course, it was true.

And then the plane flew us and the body to Panama. And my dad had her cremated in Panama City. The next day we flew home on Pan Am Airlines to San Francisco. I mean, we were just—we barely were talking. We were so busy just crying all the time. I didn't stop crying for the whole memorial service. I don't even remember it. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't want to live. I didn't want to—I had lost faith in everything.

But I decided, well, I don't have anything to do. I've got a job in Colombia. I've at least got to go back and finish that job. No use sticking around here. So flying back—I remember going over Colombia and seeing the Caribbean and the Colombian coastline. And I thought, why am I coming back here? This is awful, this world of poverty. You don't have access to health care. People can't diagnose problems. You can't get the surgery you want to get. This is awful. I watched people on the street. Nobody would help people who would fall down, elderly people, or people who were disabled. It was just sort of a meanness that's in a

world of poverty, as we see it from the outside, a meanness. I said, why am I doing this?

This was a profound moment in my life. I just said, well, why did you join the Peace Corps? It was because you knew conditions like this exist around the world and you thought you could do something about it. But you *never, ever* thought that those conditions in some other country would affect you personally in your own family. And it doesn't matter that you are an American citizen and you have an American passport. We didn't have credit cards in those days but—you have a wallet with some American Express checks. You have some money to get you to the next spot. We could have gone to Panama City but then she couldn't be moved. And in Panama City, would an American hospital at the canal have saved her life? I don't know.

But at that moment I said, you know what? Now I know what I'm going to do with the rest of my life. [crying] I'm going to make sure nobody has this pain. Nobody should have to have this pain. I'm going to go out and fight the war on poverty. I'm not from a Colombian city and my fight isn't here in Colombia. My fight is back home in America. Lyndon Johnson had started the War on Poverty. It was the right thing to do. And I'm going to go back and make sure that no child in this country, and hopefully no child in the world, will grow up without access to health care, without education. Learning to read and write is so fundamental. And it's so fundamental that when you do have an injury or cold or a broken bone that you can see a doctor; you can get a prescription drug; you can get medicine. I saw so many kids dying because nobody could—they couldn't treat them. There was just no hope. And the sorrow for those parents.

And realize too, that you don't have a chance if you don't have a safe place to sleep. Colombia was probably the most diverse fruit growing area in the world. So starvation wasn't a problem. But safe places to sleep for families was a problem.

An Epiphany: Beginning Political Life

And that was that moment. I just said, that's something I want to do. I'm going to fight the War on Poverty. I don't know how I'm going to do it. But I've been taught how to do community organizing so maybe I'll go back and— And that was what set my—

You asked about politics. You know, I'd rejected that. I went back and went to law school. But I was just in the first year of law school at Santa Clara and heard that my cousin, John Gieshen, was killed in Vietnam and I just thought, God, law school is not what I want to do. I'm doing this because my father's a lawyer and my grandfather is a lawyer. I don't know what I want to do with my life but I don't want to be a lawyer. And I wasn't a very good student. So I left law school.

The only thing available then was going to Sacramento. That's where my father—I had friends who were working in politics. I thought, that's where change happens. But I'm not going to get into politics. I'm just going to be a staffer. So I got a job in Sacramento and eventually my friends said, "You come from a very famous former senator up here who everybody knows. You ought to do this. You ought to get into elective office. You ought to run for city council in Sacramento." I said, "Nah, I'm not interested in that."

And they kept bugging me and it was all about: get involved in Sacramento politics. I was married and my wife, Shary, was working for John Moss, who was a Sacramento congressman, in his district office. And so we were tied into the political families and the city council, and all that. And we owned our first home.

And then after about five years in Sacramento, I said, "You know what I'd really like to do. I'd like to live in Monterey County because we got Cesar Chavez organizing. There's poverty among farmworkers. I speak Spanish. I identify with that culture. That's where I want to be."

So I was trying to find jobs that would get me back here. And lo and behold, what happens is that the county supervisor who had been representing the fifth district, Monterey Peninsula, on the board of supervisors, resigned from office in November, December of Ronald Reagan's final year as governor, with the idea that the governor appoint somebody, and he'll appoint a Republican. But lo and behold, to the shock of the Republican Party on the Monterey Peninsula, he didn't appoint anybody that anybody knew. He appointed a former treasurer of his campaign who lived in Palm Springs, who had retired in Pebble Beach.

So this guy gets appointed to the board of supervisors, and had no sense of conflict of interest. He opens up his office in Pebble Beach and you have to pay to get through the gate. So his constituents are saying, we can't do that. And then he started buying property and working on zoning it as a supervisor. And the environmental community started protesting. And people in Pebble Beach weren't inviting him to the social parties. His wife went to him and said, "Honey,

we were going to retire here. We've ended up developing enemies here. Let's get the hell out of here and go back to Palm Springs," or wherever it was.

So he resigns from the board of supervisors. This is in April 1975. And Shary and I had used Easter week recess to explore Northern California by car. We had worked the previous fall in a Congressional campaign in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties for Julian Camacho, who was a Democratic nominee running against the incumbent congressman named Burt Talcott. Everybody thought Julian had a chance. He was an incredible candidate. I worked for him, thinking, if he gets elected, then I'll get a job in his district office, and that's how I get back to having employment in Monterey County.

Julian loses by just a small amount. And really it exposed Burt Talcott as essentially a do-nothing congressman. And then, the next election Leon Panetta came in and wiped him out.

We'd rented a house here in Carmel. We'd actually rented a house from the estate of my aunt, a house that when I grew up I always wanted to live in. God, I loved this little house. So the lawyer for my aunt—I called him because my aunt was in a rest home. I said, "Can anybody live in her house?" She said, "Well, she's left her house to Stanford and no, I don't think anybody can live there."

Well, just before we were moving here and we were going to live with my dad for a week or so until we could find a rental, the lawyer calls and says, "Your aunt died and the house goes to Stanford. But I've suggested to Stanford that they should have a caretaker. Would you like to rent it?"

I said, "I'd love to." He said, "By the way, your aunt left all the furniture in the house to your mom." And my mom had died. "You're the heir successor. So you and your sister have—I told Stanford the tenants can't hurt the house because they own all the stuff inside of it."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: "So, they'll accept you living there." I thought, wow, this is ideal.

So when we were living there and Julian loses, my wife said, "I'm just staying here as long as we can until we lose this house." So I was commuting back and forth to Sacramento. And then we had spring break in 1975 and I said, "You know, let's you and I just drive around to all the places I've never explored north of Sacramento, the Northern Sierras, and we can cut across the top of California and come down through the Mendocino area, and back down the coast, and we can be home for Easter here in Carmel at my parents' house, my father's house." So we decided to do that. The last day we drove from Weaverville to Mendocino, to the Little River Inn. We had reservations there.

It was fascinating. It was a long, windy drive. I loved it. But I was tired. We got to the Little River Inn. Shary said, "I'm going to go up and have a drink." I said, "Fine, you go have a drink. I'm going to unload the car and I'm going to take a nap." So I take a quick nap and I go up to the bar. My wife is sitting there talking to a guy named Austin Comstock. Austin Comstock was a Santa Cruz lawyer.

Reti: Yes!

Farr: I don't know what they were talking about, but I walk up and my wife says, "I'd like to introduce my husband, Sam Farr." And he says, "Sam Farr. Are you related to Fred Farr?" I said, "Yeah, that's my dad." He says, "Oh, I heard on television last night that Governor Brown, Jerry Brown, might appoint him to the board of supervisors in Monterey County." I said, "What's that all about?" He said, "Oh, that guy who was a Republican who was on the board of supervisors resigned and the governor has to have a replacement."

And I said to Shary, "That's the job I want."

Reti: (laughter)

Farr: So I go the phone. I didn't talk to Austin very long. I go to the phone and I called Dad and I said, "What's this, Dad? I'd like to have that job." He said, "Come on home and we'll talk about it. Maybe we can both apply." (laughs)

So we did. I came home that Easter Sunday, drove all the way down from Mendocino. I said, "I want that job!" He said, "I've already—I sent a letter to Governor Brown saying I have all this experience and I don't know if he's interested in an old man, but maybe he wants a younger person. Why don't you apply?"

So the press made a big thing of father and son running against each other.

Reti: (laughs) I didn't know that story at all.

Farr: Oh, it was really cute. "Well, what are you doing? You don't like each other?" "We both like each other." "Well, what the heck?"

Then my father—I didn't know this but I learned later—since I did get the appointment. He wrote a letter to the governor saying, "If it comes down to two Farrs, select the younger one."

Reti: Aw.

Farr: Anyway, I've always kidded Austin Comstock in Santa Cruz. I say, "You launched my political career at the bar at the Little River Inn." (laughs)

Working as Staff for the California State Legislature

Reti: Wow, that's a terrific story. So we're just about out of time for today, but I just want to tie up a couple of loose ends. So what was your staff position in Sacramento?

Farr: Well, the California legislature had a very unique position. They hired what they called legislative analysts back in the fifties, the first state to do that. Essentially, the legislature said, "Look, the governor proposes his budget to the legislature every year, and then we have hearings on it, but we don't have any expertise to know whether he's asking for the right things, or the wrong things, or too much money. We need our own independence to be able to make decisions on appropriating money." So they hired a legislative analyst named Alan Post, who became the guru of legislative analysts in the United States. He was really an institution because he had so much respect throughout the state, from academia—a nonpartisan, really highly principled person who had opinions based on real good analysis. He was the silent visionary for the state and for Governor Pat Brown.

So anyway, he was asked by the legislature to do a whole bunch of cost-effectiveness studies of categorical education programs, programs like the Miller-Unruh Special Reading Program, the release time for teachers in Title One schools. It was federal and state programs that had specialized in special education and things like that, what they call categorical programs, meaning if you qualify in that category, you get the services. But the legislature was saying, "We've got all these categories—some are trying to teach math; some are trying to teach English, or reading. And we want to know what works. We can't fund them all." What works, is a pretty simple question and pretty naïve.

So anyway, they gave the analyst some money and said, "You do the work." And he went out and hired people. I didn't have any background in economics or anything but he knew my dad. He called my dad and he said, "I hear your son is looking for a job. I might have one for him." I had also been the instructor for his son, who had joined the Peace Corps and gone to Colombia, so there was a connection there. I think he took a risk in hiring me, but he thought, really what this team is going to do is go out and do site studies, interviews with schoolteachers and people that are in the schools. I know in Sam's work in the Peace Corps that's what he did, so he's got some real training in that.

So I really enjoyed that. I'm writing now. I was struggling learning to write. But I was really good at going out and asking questions and analyzing whether these programs were working or not. And that was my first job.

Then that job was over. Most of the team was moving on and by then people knew everybody in the capitol. And when I was in law school, one of my

classmates was working as a consultant for the Constitutional Amendments Committee in the assembly and he came to me and he said, "You know, nobody knows this, but I'm leaving. And I want you to take my job." I said, "I haven't finished law school like you did." He said, "Don't worry, Sam. You can handle this. You know how to do legal research. You know how to read opinions. Anyway, there's a Constitutional Revision Commission and all you're doing is taking the recommendations of that commission and putting them into legislation and analyzing it for the committee. This is the job and you can handle it."

So I said okay. And he said, "Well, I'm going to go to my boss and tell him that I'm leaving but I have a perfect fit for taking my job." And that's how I got that job.

I was really loving that job but I wanted to get back to Monterey County.

Reti: Yes. And how did you meet your wife?

Farr: Well, that's an interesting story. I think most people, before they have the woman or the husband of their choice, they had somebody else in their life?

Reti: Yes. (chuckles)

Farr: And I had somebody else in my life at that time. She was actually visiting me in the Peace Corps. She was my sister's best friend and I had met her in the hospital when my mother was dying, and we started dating then. And anyway, that went on for a couple of years and it was pretty serious. But then we were

traveling around the East Coast visiting Peace Corps volunteers and relatives and she said, "I don't want to go out with you anymore."

I was just heartbroken. And you know, you get defensive. She was saying, "Well, you know. There are lots of people out there. You'll meet some interesting people. Isn't there anybody you'd like to go out with?" And I had seen Shary, my [future] wife's, picture on the bulletin board of our home in Carmel because my father collected photographs and he always put them up. She was my cousin's best friend. And she was really cute! So I said, "Yeah! There is. There's this girl named Sharon Baldwin." She said, "I know that girl. She's really cute. She's really nice." And I said, "I'm going to meet her. Maybe I'll marry her!" Two years later I meet her and married her.

Reti: Wow, that's spooky and wonderful.

Farr: We've been married forty-eight years this year. And then that's an interesting story because I told Shary—I mean, I was just fresh out of the Peace Corps and everything. I was working for Peace Corps as a trainer and also a recruiter, and living in San Francisco, and going down to see her in LA. You know, you could fly from San Francisco to LA on PSA [Pacific Southwest Airlines] for thirteen dollars?

Reti: I didn't remember how much it cost, but I did it as a child. Yes.

Farr: Yes. So the Peace Corps allowed you—as a recruiter you go to the universities, and we were the Western United States. So there were about fifteen of us in the office, and we would make arrangements with the universities.

You'd do it by geographical region. So I would take PSA and travel through LA on the weekends to see her.

Reti: She was down in LA by then.

Farr: She was from LA and going to UCLA and working. And so the Peace Corps was so much a part of my life that when we got married, I said, "You know what? To really understand me you've got to go back to Colombia and see where I was a Peace Corps volunteer in this barrio in Medellín." So we spent our honeymoon there—

And about halfway through it, she had a breakdown. She said, "This isn't about a honeymoon. This is about you coming home for a homecoming." (laughs) And I said, "Well, wait until you see the other half because we're going to go to this wonderful hacienda, not the one where my sister died, but another one. And I think you'll just love it." She fell in love with the people and everything. She remembers (laughs) for years—I think today she'd tell you, "Our marriage has stayed together because he owes me *so much* (laughs) for going back to his barrio!" She didn't speak a word of Spanish. People weren't interested in her: "Who is this lady behind you?" "Oh, she's my wife." "Oh, that's interesting. Where have *you* been?" It was interesting. In the barrio, when you leave, people had no concept that you'd gone back to the United States and had this whole life, and met people, and married. It was like, "We haven't seen you in a while. Where you been? Did you go over to Bogotá or something? You just haven't been in town."

It was like, wow. You could not explain all that. It was, “We’re so happy to have you back.” So anyway, it was a wonderful, again, cross-cultural learning experience for both of us. And since, Shary has been back to Colombia and she just loves it. I dated a Colombia girl and we’ve all become really close friends, the families. And my partner in the Peace Corps, Maureen Orth—you know, she’s Tim Russert’s widow and she’s a writer for *Vanity Fair*—she built a school in her barrio and we go back all the time to help with that. It’s been a phenomenal life, going back to this moment of service that changed our lives.

The Colombian Embassy just gave me a huge retirement reception, 150 people there. You know, I was so shocked, people that I haven’t seen in forty years. The Who’s Who of Washington shows up and the president of Colombia does a special tribute to me. I mean, it was just phenomenal. So the Peace Corps and Colombia have been a fundamental part of my whole adult life. I think my whole perception of myself changed from being a Peace Corps volunteer. It’s fascinating having a perspective on your own culture through living in a different one, and of yourself, and of your values, and of your passions. It brought them all out.

Reti: Well, I think that’s a really good place for us to stop today. We can pick up next time with the Monterey County supervisor chapter of your life.

Farr: Yeah, that’s fascinating.

The Soberanes Fire

Reti: This is August 2, 2016 and this is Irene Reti. I am here with Sam Farr at the Monterey County Supervisor's office of David Potter, who I think has been in office almost twenty years.^{viii}

Farr: Yeah, he's at a board meeting today, so we could use his office.

Reti: Yes, which is really very nice of him. And we're here on a rather smoky morning, with the Big Sur [Soberanes] fire burning and only 18 percent controlled?^x

Farr: Well, I think that the alarm of the fire is much greater than the bite. They've really been successful in directing the fire. They want the fire to burn in a southeastern direction. They have to prioritize. This fire is burning in every direction because the winds have been so goofy around here. That's what's caused the problems with this fire. But with the northern area, which is the rim of the Carmel Valley, and the western area, which is the Big Sur Highway and Palo Colorado—those are where the homes are. And they've, I think, pretty effectively, protected the homes. So they've sort of ignored the other end of it, which is the east and the south. And that's the direction of the Los Padres [National Forest]. And frankly, the wildlife biologists think that these fires are beneficial for us. So although there's panic because it's burning uncontrolled in those areas, there's actually a control line around what they call the boxed perimeter. And what they'll do is, as they perfect that perimeter and the winds are in the right direction, they'll backfire. So a lot of this new acreage actually that's been added to the fire has been because of backfiring, man-made fires.

What you do is you burn a fire into a fire and then you don't have any fuel left for it to burn.

Reti: Okay, well that's good to hear.

Farr: But we're suffering from the smoke because the winds aren't doing anything.

Reti: Yeah, and we've got fog carrying all the little particles.

Farr: Smoke and fog, yeah.

Becoming a Monterey County Supervisor

Reti: So, we're going to go back in time to 1975, when you were appointed to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors by Governor Jerry Brown. We were just starting to talk about that last time. So I want to get into what the major issues were that you were dealing with during those five years.

Farr: Well, in April of 1975 that's when there was a vacancy on the board of supervisors. I think we discussed that [last time].

Reti: Yes.

Farr: So I applied to take that position and my dad did too (chuckles). Jerry Brown had a wonderful staffer, who had been a law professor of mine at Santa Clara University, who I was very fond of, a guy named Marc Poche. Marc Poche had actually run for the assembly, a very politically interested guy, a great jurist, a great professor, and a good friend of Jerry Brown's. Because Jerry went to Santa

Clara as well. And Marc Poche was an advisor to Jerry Brown, and the story is that he told Jerry, "Look, you got to appoint one of the Farrs." And my father had written a letter saying, "If it comes down to two Farrs, appoint the younger."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So Jerry did appoint me. I went for an interview at Marc Poche's house with Governor Jerry Brown. And it's interesting, because there's a Santa Cruz connection there too. There was a vacancy on the board of supervisors in Santa Cruz County at the same time. So a guy named Ed Borvats, I think he was a schoolteacher or involved in education, he was interviewing the same day. We both met the governor at Marc Poche's house. And then the governor's staff asked me if I wanted to go with the governor over to the University of Santa Clara, which was an interesting moment because it was in June of 1975. He'd been sworn in as governor in January of 1975. For six months, Jerry Brown had never had a press conference, as a brand-new governor of California. He wasn't doing public speaking a lot. And he ended up being the commencement address speaker at Santa Clara.

So they asked me and I rode over in the car with him. And Jerry (laughs) says to Marc Poche, "Well, what should say at the [graduation]?" I thought, the governor's about to give a commencement address and he hasn't written anything out? Which is Jerry's style. You know, he's wonderful at that. But I loved the humor they had in the car because Mark said, "Well, why don't you just tell them that you flunked out of Santa Clara, and so you decided to become a Jesuit. And you went up in the mountains and studied until you realized that

your father, who was governor, had a lot of influence with the Board of Regents, so he got you into the University of California.”

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: (laughs) He said, “Why don’t you tell the students that?” Jerry was laughing. And he gave one of his Moonbeam speeches and everybody loved it. And I went home not knowing whether— Then I got a call saying he’d finally made a decision. It was one of the first political decisions he made. He appointed me and Ed Borvats the same day.

The date of swearing in I think was June 15. I remember the day that I got sworn in. There were big headlines, but right under the headlines was that the Public Utilities Commission had now stopped the issuing of water permits for the Cal American Water Company. So there was this huge uprising [because people were afraid] that economic growth would actually stop, and the Peninsula would die, and everybody would be out of work. They immediately asked me to tell the governor to change that. So I was involved with water from my first day of being sworn in.

And it was interesting being sworn in because I was driving over to the board of supervisors, and my father was in a different car. I don’t remember who I was driving with but they said, “Well, what are you going to say?” And I said, “Well, you know. I’m just a citizen elected official. I’m not going to be one of these pontificating politicians.” And he said, “You’re going to be sworn into an elected office. You’ve got to say something.” I said, “I do?” (laughs)

Reti: A rite of initiation.

Farr: So I didn't know what I was going to say. But the nice thing was that Justice Phil Gibson, who had been chief justice of the California Supreme Court, had been also finance director for the state of California. He had an incredible career, a wonderful jurist who came out of Mississippi and became one of the great shining jurists of California. He'd retired to Carmel. His young wife, who had been a legal aid for him, Vickie Gibson, was a close friend of my father's. And my father knew Justice Gibson, so he asked him if he would swear me in. He came in and did the swearing in and reminded the board that like Harry S. Truman, he also grew up in Mississippi, and that he (Justice Gibson) was very fond of local government, particularly boards of supervisors, because that was where Harry S. Truman began his political career.

Reti: Ah!

Farr: And therefore maybe something will happen to Sam Farr today. So it was an interesting day.

But the water issue became immediately ensconced with it—

Organizing a Bike Ride in Support of the California Coastal Act

On top of that, the Coastal Act. I really had been involved in the campaign in 1972 to get the initiative adopted and helped organize a bike ride down the coast that was so famous to getting attention to Proposition 20. Nobody had any money in those days for initiative campaigns.

Reti: We didn't talk about that.

Farr: Oh, we've got to get into that.

Reti: Tell me that story.

Farr: You want to do that story?

Reti: Yes, let's backtrack to that story.

Farr: Okay, this is the summer of 1975. I was a staff member in the California Legislature. My close friends in the legislature, other staffers, were a fellow named Bill Press, who worked for Senator Peter Behr, who had been elected out of Marin County, a Republican, a very progressive Republican who carried a lot of the environmental legislation, and Peter Douglas, who was a staff member to Alan Sieroty. Peter Douglas wrote the Coastal Act, which members like Alan Sieroty and my dad, in the early years, had tried to get adapted through the legislature. It was based on the idea that California had no master plan for its coast, so all of these seventy-five different jurisdictions along the coast—harbor districts, and supervisors, and cities—were just doing sprawl all over the coast. We saw beaches being locked up, and Malibu just building along the coast. The whole California coast was going to become like Malibu, shut off from access.

That's what stirred up all this politics, that we needed something that would put in check and balances this runaway, massive development that was going on along the coast, and this locking up of beaches. The legislature, with all the influences of special interests, never could pass these bills. So legislators themselves were frustrated and helped, by taking the legislation they'd written,

with legislative counsel's help, and turning it into an initiative that got adopted by the voters in that November election.

But here's what the initiative said. It said: we're going to create these guidelines for the whole state of California, and we're going to create a commission to implement the guidelines, and to study the state, and to come back to the legislature by 1976 with a recommendation of how should we implement what they've learned about managing the California coast from a development standpoint. The commission was based after the model created in the San Francisco Bay Area, which was a regional, for the whole bay, called BCDC, the Bay Area Conservation and Development Commission. The chair of BCDC was Mel Lane, who was the publisher of *Sunset Magazine*, a Republican. And the executive director was a fellow named Joe Bodovitz, who worked for Mel. And so Ronald Reagan, who was the governor when this passed, had the responsibility for appointing his appointees to the commission, plus the state senate, and the Speaker of the Assembly, plus other locals. Ronald Reagan appointed Mel Lane. It was a smart appointment because he really had knowledge about regional controversies, shoreline controversies. And Mel Lane had the wisdom to take Joe Bodovitz with him. So you had as the chair and the executive director, really experienced people. And my dad was put on the commission because he was a former state senator and the state senate appointed him, and he had carried a lot of legislation.

So what that initiative did is it asked the local governments: where was the coastal line? That was a huge controversy because the initiative said essentially the line would go to the top of the first coastal mountains. So people said, "Okay,

then when you get to a river like Carmel River, or more importantly, like the entrance to San Francisco Bay, does that line follow the mountains up through Mount Diablo, go up to the foothills of the Sierra, and come back down on the other side, on the Marin County side?" (laughs) And they said, "No, it goes across the Golden Gate Bridge. We'll skip—"

So anyway, the controversy—here, I am the county supervisor and they're saying, "Oh, this Coastal Act is going to take care of Cachagua," (which is where the fire is burning now), which is way up at the headwaters of the Carmel River. And the ranchers up there were like, "We don't want any of that regulation up here, you know." They even hung me in effigy. They invited me to a meeting in a barn. I'm a brand-new supervisor. And there I am, like a scarecrow or something, hanging from the ceiling. And it was like, you know, this is how angry we are.

And then, plus the water. So I really had my arms filled like no other supervisor. And they weren't very sympathetic to the Coastal Act. I had been very supportive of it because I had been involved in this campaign to get it passed.

Anyway, this [Coastal Act] initiative qualified for the ballot and they didn't have a lot of money to campaign. We were thinking about how do we get press attention? So it was the idea of Bill Press and Peter Douglas—let's do a coastal bike ride. And I'm in this group. And Bill said, "Well, you know, Sam, why don't you take over the bike ride because I'm going to Europe for the summer on vacation. My wife and I already had this planned. And Peter said, "I've got to do something else. You live on the coast."

I'm a staffer now. I'm not a member of the legislature. I'm not even a supervisor.

Reti: This is in 1972.

Farr: This is in '72. So I volunteer to organize the bike ride. And fortunately, Jim Mills, who was the Speaker of the Senate Pro Tempore, the head of the Senate, was a bicyclist. And he loved the idea. So we used his office to call up the State Parks and call up the Highway Patrol and say, "We're going to do this bike ride." Now, nobody had done bike rides, so it wasn't like there was any protocol for this.

Reti: Right, this is way before the AIDS Ride.

Farr: Oh, it was way before anything. Oh, no. Nobody had ever done any.

So this is how it started: we put out a press release statewide saying, "Anybody who would like to be on a bike ride to promote the benefits of Proposition 20, show up at Lands End in San Francisco and we're going to ride all the way to San Diego." We didn't even ask for people to RSVP. And then we called the Highway Patrol and said, "Whoever shows up, we're going to need a route." And the Highway Patrol probably wouldn't have ever allowed it, except the President Pro Tempore of the Senate was the key figure, right? And Jim Mills was a wonderful guy. He would ride a little bit and then he had a big van that his staffer drove and he got picked up. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: But we couldn't have done it without him. And then we called State Parks and said, "We're going to camp in your parks." And then we called the local Sierra Club chapters and said, "By the way, we're going to arrive there on this and this day. Could your local chapter feed us?" By the end of the thing, people were so tired of beans and chicken, barbequed chicken and beans.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: (laughs) They said, "Can't the Sierra Club eat anything but that?" But here I am, at Lands End. And I had no idea—I didn't want to worry about liability or anything. We had no insurance. We just did this. People showed up. And it was about sixty-seven people. And one was a little girl, eleven years old. Her brother brought her over. Her brother said—I think her name was Emily—he said, "My mom asked me to bring Emily over here. We want to know who is in charge of this bike ride?" I said, "I am." He said, "Well, who are these people?" I said, "Well, look around. They are who they are. I mean, I don't know who they are." And they were all ages. And immediately, the gals on the ride liked little Emily because she wanted to go. But what do you tell this brother: "Mom told me to bring her over here and if you look all right, leave her here with her bike and my mom will pick her up in San Diego. If you don't look all right, I'm supposed to put her on a plane back home to Los Angeles."

Reti: (laughs) They had come all the way from LA?

Farr: No, he was a student at Cal. So Emily ends up—the second night is here in Monterey. And the third night is down in Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park. And my wife was there helping prepare the dinner for everybody. She finds out that

Emily's mother—my wife is from Southern California and knew Emily's mother, and had been the flower girl in Emily's mother's wedding. Small world. (laughs) The oldest guy was about eighty-seven years old. He was a former nuclear physicist, retired. We had one guy, a big, hefty macho guy, who we found out later was an ex con (laughs) because he got busted for stealing candy bars at the San Simeon grocery store. So we had characters.

I ended up on a bike because one of the gals fell and broke her arm and she had a cast on it, so she couldn't [ride]. She said, "You ride my bike and I'll drive your car." We had a sag wagon with all the gear in my station wagon. And we just stopped everyplace on the coast there was a sign saying "This is private property. Keep off. No access." And we'd use that sign as a background and we'd invite reporters to come. People would show up because this was kind of an eclectic thing, with Jim Mills and— And even in LA, we had the big NRA supporter, the movie star [Charlton Heston]. We had movie stars who would ride. You could ride for a day, you could ride for an hour, you could ride for a moment. You could ride for the whole trip. And we ended up with just as many people at the end as we started with, although some of them were different people, because people dropped off along the way.

It was the first kind of effective use of using bike rides as an organizing tool, to make a political statement, and to demonstrate to the press. And I think we won the hearts and minds of people because we didn't spend a lot on that initiative [Proposition 20], and it passed [in 1972]. And the rest is history. It's probably the greatest coastal zone management act in the world. And then the legislature enacted a permanent California Coastal Act in 1976.⁴

So here I am, on the board of supervisors in Monterey County. And the new law required that all the local governments along the coast—there are about seventy-five of them, including harbor districts—each one of them had to develop a Local Coastal Program, known as an LCP. That is the state says: here are the statewide guidelines for what we want you to do in protecting the coast. For example, we want the development along the coast to be coastal dependent, which means related to the ocean. So the idea is if on the Monterey wharf, if you wanted a permit to open a McDonald's, they'd say, "Well, you know, McDonald's doesn't have to be on a wharf. A fish restaurant, a tackle shop, maybe something related to the ocean?" Even T-shirts and binoculars might be related to the ocean, so those are okay. But things that are just sort of franchises. The Coastal Act was making local elected officials focus on access to the coast and relatibility to the coast. And there was a lot of good, smart stuff about making the coast accessible, which had been the most controversial issue in the campaign. Because when Malibu people came in to get their remodeling permits, they'd say, "Okay, now you've got to provide access on that little narrow strip between you and the other house. You're going to let people walk right through." The Coastal Commission enforced it. And homeowners sued in court and the court upheld the Coastal Act.

The recreation of California is on the coastline. And even though most of the population lives on the coastline, it is supported heavily by the people from the San Joaquin Valley. People from Fresno go to the coast when it's hot in Fresno and Bakersfield. And everybody has friends who live at the beach, or go to the beach. So the idea of, "let's preserve our coast," has really politically held up

across the state. It's probably the strongest land use law in the world. Other countries are now coming to examine it. But it all started with this rump group out of Sacramento to try to get this thing qualified for the ballot in 1972.

Reti: I love that story, Sam.

Farr: We actually had a *Sacramento Bee* reporter, Doug Willis, who was going to come on the bike ride. He was a bicyclist. He was one of the reporters who we knew in Sacramento. In the 1970s, the young people who were staffers in the Capitol who played volleyball in the park in front of our house. It was a social life. In those days, the legislature was out by five o'clock at night and everybody would go home and have normal lives. Now it's sort of a city of its own, with a social life of its own within the Capitol community.

Willis worked for the *Sacramento Bee*, a great writer. And he was called away at the last minute to cover the death penalty trial, the [serial] murder by Juan Corona.³¹ He had to pull out. And I swear, if he had been able to do that trip, there would have been a book coming out of it. It would have been as great as any of the sixties or seventies books like *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Tests* or *Boys on the Bus*.

Reti: The road trip genre. That would have been great.

Farr: Road trips, yeah. Because the characters who showed up to ride were phenomenal—the people we met along the way and the people who participated in promoting Proposition 20 were an eclectic group.

Land Use Planning

So that election was 1972. In 1975, I was a Monterey County supervisor having to carry out coastal zone management law, very controversial. But it was very exciting to start these local coastal programs because that's what I wanted to do. I mean, local government is in charge of planning in California. One of the things that's so disturbing to me now is that nobody teaches government or civics anymore in schools, so people really don't have an idea of what governments do. They just know there's a lot of it out there because every time you turn there's a government regulation. With local governments, you've got to go out and get permits for anything you want to do with your land. People want to build stuff. And yet, there's neighbors who don't want you to build it. So all that controversy about land use—I tell kids, “Look, the size of your city, whether it grows out, or whether it grows up, the authorities for cities is the same. Los Angeles and San Francisco, and Carmel have the exact same authorities in law. They've just chosen politically to become different in size and look—San Francisco to grow *up* and Los Angeles to go *out*, and Carmel to stay the *same*. It's all under the same kind of laws and that's strong law at the local level.”

Different governments do different things: Local is land use; universities and education, highways and parks are [run by] state government. The federal government, for example, doesn't do education. Almost all licensing for professionals in California is state law. Why? Because each profession wants to make sure that anybody who is getting into real estate, or an insurance broker, or a cop, or a teacher, or a doctor, or whatever, has to have a state license. California

has probably more licensure requirements than any other state. And that's all politics. But that's state politics.

And then, the federal politics is obviously big decisions, the defense department, and science in space, and things like that. NOAA and the oceans. But the federal government is also very involved with personal issues because your income taxes are federal, your passports, your immigration issues, your Social Security, your Medicare, your veteran's benefits—all these things that affect you personally, that you have an account with, or have an interest in, are at the federal governmental level. It's interesting that issues that are personal, most close to you, are managed by the government farthest away.

So anyway, the board of supervisors taught me that we have too many governments in California. We have over 6000 special districts. We have 58 counties, and 250 cities, and 1200 school districts, and 6000 special districts, each with its own board of directors, mostly elected, and own tax base and budget.

Reti: What would be an example of a special district?

Farr: Well, that would be a park district, or a water district, cemetery districts, community service districts. We have a lot in this county. Members of the board of supervisors are appointed to different regional commissions. One of those in each county is an agency called LAFCO, the Local Agency Formation Commission, which grew out of the San Francisco Bay Area, and the need at the county level to have an independent commission to look at proposals for annexation. Annexation was essentially cities grabbing unincorporated areas and saying—our city boundaries are going to go out to here, out to here, out to

here—and keep expanding, with no checks and balances. And then the counties started saying, “Well, we’re going to develop the shopping center, so that we can get the income from the shopping center, rather than annexing the land to you, the city.” People don’t realize the difference between city authority and county authority, but in an unincorporated area, a county-maintained area, your sheriffs have no authorities to do vehicle stops. That’s only up to the Highway Patrol. So if you have problems with your shopping center traffic, it’s the California Highway Patrol who are supposed to be out on the California highways, not dealing with somebody’s shopping center exit/egress—

County governments are rural governments. They are very, very involved in all of the human aspects of a county—you know, the jails and the courts and social service programs, welfare and so on. The responsibility is very rural vs. urbanized cities.

Reti: Well, certainly Monterey County is mostly rural, versus urbanized cities.

Farr: And Santa Cruz. So I got on this LAFCO board because I just was curious about it, and they immediately elected me chair. I didn’t even know what the heck—I had never heard of LAFCO until I got on the board. Now it’s one of my favorite little silent, unknown organizations in government that I think has incredible power, and in Santa Cruz County is used very forcefully to limit the expansion of the cities of Watsonville, Santa Cruz, and Scotts Valley, and Capitola. It also, I think, could be very involved in helping initiate collaboration more between special districts because we have way too many of them.

So anyway, what was interesting about my job on the board of supervisors—I get this appointment and I am now engaged in these local issues, is that here I represent this iconic real estate known as Pebble Beach, I mean all over the world, Pebble Beach. And all of Big Sur. All of Carmel Valley. And the surroundings of Carmel. The management of these areas through local land use planning.

To me, the legacy I left as a supervisor was initiating the rewrite of every single one of those regional master plans. So we rewrote the Master Plan for Big Sur, which became the local coastal program for the Coastal Act. We rewrote the Carmel Highlands Master Plan, the Pebble Beach Master Plan. And the Carmel Valley Master Plan, which was unrelated to the Coastal Act, but just had to be done because the county was going to build a four-lane highway up Carmel Valley and there was no stopping of massive developments up there. I found that there was nobody looking at, what is the outcome of this runaway sprawl. And fortunately, the county had, in doing the Carmel Valley Plan, when they did the initial master plan, a fellow named Ed DeMars, who was the county planning director, a wonderful guy—he never had any training in planning at all, he came out of the building inspector’s department at Monterey County—but just had a sense of appropriateness of growth and location. So he was able to influence the board in its initial adoption of the Carmel Valley Master Plan to limit commercial development to the Carmel Valley Village; to Mid-Valley Shopping Center; and to create a shopping center at the mouth of the valley, so that there would be no “spot zoning” or “strip zoning” along the Carmel Valley Road—all these commercial gas stations and fast food services that might have gone up.

Reti: Right, you see it now. Those are the three places with development. So those were some of the issues in the Carmel Valley.

Farr: Well, it was about how and where are we going to grow with all these people coming? These commercial zones—how big are they going to be? Are we going to create new ones? I mean, it's still controversial today. The irony is that a couple of years ago Carmel Valley was so fed up with the board of supervisors, because the valley only has one supervisor, the fifth district supervisor, representing them, who could oppose the proposals for developing the valley, but then the other four supervisors would vote for the developer. So the Carmel Valley just in the last four years did this—(laughs) (I told them they were nuts because of the unintended consequences)—the valley residents tried to incorporate the valley to stop growth. They were trying to order a city to stop growth, just the opposite of what city powers are supposed to do. That ballot measure failed very narrowly. But it was a message to the county to stop treading on Carmel Valley and stop allowing development.

Now it's spread back on the front pages because the owners of the land where the golf course is there, the ones at the mouth of the valley, Rancho Cañada, have two golf courses, and the landowners are an old historic family in this area, the Hattons, of the Hatton Canyon and all that. I didn't know that, but they've been leasing the land to the golf courses all these years. The owner of the golf courses at one time had proposed to shut down one of the golf courses and build affordable housing, which some people liked. Other people said, "We don't want any more housing. We don't want [to use] any more water." Well, they would use less water in the housing than they would on the golf course.

Well, recently, the landowner announced that they are shutting both golf courses down. They are putting one of the golf courses in total open space, a park. And on the other one they are going to allow for this affordable housing. So it's back to being an issue. Great intentions here. Everybody loves it. But now some people want to fight the housing, and some people want to fight it *because* it will be affordable, which I think it absolutely nuts. I mean, everybody around here needs a place to live, and if you don't have affordable housing, then you have commuter traffic that chokes off the Peninsula. So these issues are going to be back. I'm sure as a retired person I'll be involved in at least commenting on all of this stuff from a historical perspective.

Reti: Yes.

Issues on the Big Sur Coast

And what were some of the issues for Big Sur at that time?

Farr: Oh, my God. Ansel Adams saw this development of Big Sur and suggested, why not have it become a national seashore? Well, national seashores are managed by the National Park Service.

Reti: Like Point Reyes is a national seashore—

Farr: Yes. That's a good example. Point Reyes is a national seashore.

So everybody starting coining this as, "Ansel Adams wants to make Big Sur into a national park." Everybody loved Ansel Adams around the nation, so when he suggested it, all of the people around the country were echoing it. And all of a

sudden Big Sur residents say, “What the hell is happening here? There’s never been any discussion. We haven’t been involved. Nobody has asked us our opinion.” And they came to me and they went to Leon Panetta, who was then the congressman. They came to me as the county supervisor. I said, “You know what we can do? We can incorporate this into our discussion on developing a local coastal program.” But the locals hired a lobbyist just to kill Ansel’s idea in Congress, convincing Leon [Panetta] not to support the bill authored by Alan Cranston, the senator from California, who was close friends with Ansel Adams. Alan introduced the bill immediately. And ironically, Leon, the congressman from here, had opposed the senator’s bill.

Reti: Why?

Farr: Because of the backlash on the local level.

Reti: Okay. It’s amazing that they didn’t talk to the locals at all before—

Farr: So I was the supervisor that said, “Okay, let’s figure out how to do this. I think the issue that’s generating the interest in a national park is a real issue. It’s that we have no effective master plan for how we’re going to handle the crowds that come here. And the counties and cities are required under state law to develop a local coastal program.

I thought, I’ll appoint the local planning committee and I’ll put some of your opponents on it.” What they didn’t know is that I was making sure the opponents were in the minority. They could have their day in court, but not

necessarily win their issue, because the majority of the committee were simply interested in a good strong local coastal program.

And we had [sighs] oh, we had meetings after meetings. I spent a lot of time in Big Sur. We also had other issues. For example, a little-known factoid is that the Red Cross—as I understand it, there were only two places in the whole United States that the Red Cross operated a free ambulance. One was the city of Carmel, out of their Red Cross chapter in Carmel. And the other was in Big Sur. And it was all fine and dandy, until the requirements led by the state, this updating of credentialing that went on all the time, required that you had to have an EMT, an Emergency Medical Technician license to be riding in an ambulance. It made good medical sense, but all of a sudden you had these volunteers who were living in Big Sur saying, “I can’t take this course to get an EMT certificate at Monterey Peninsula College. I would be driving all the way to Monterey Peninsula College—it takes me 45 minutes to an hour—and then sit in a course, and then drive home at night, all for a voluntary job that pays nada.”

And I don’t know what happened in Carmel, but the Big Sur ambulance, which nobody wanted to lose, was about to be lost because of credentials. Well, then I said, “We’ve got to figure this out.” So I went to the county and said, “We got a health clinic down there. Why don’t we just start investing some attention to the health clinic.” And then we had a doctor here who lived in Big Sur, and his wife was a nurse. And they’d been teaching the course at Monterey Peninsula College. I talked to them and he said, “I’ll just teach EMT right here in Big Sur.”

So what was interesting is the navy had an operation there at the [Point Sur] Lighthouse. It was men, very few women. But they had nothing to do. So they volunteered. It obviously looked good on their resume to have an EMT credential. So we had forty-eight people pass the test. I think we had the highest per capita of EMT's in the United States. (laughs)

So we maintained the ambulance. Only for a short time, because then the navy closed the medical facility, All the navy guys moved away. The people who were citizens down there had either moved or changed. And the Red Cross ended up having to give up their ambulance in both Carmel and Big Sur.

But the wonderful thing that stayed on was the creation of a clinic down there that the county could use as a rural clinic. And it's still open today and it has a local foundation that helps it. The private sector really invests heavily in it. And the fire department in Big Sur, even though it's just a voluntary fire department, has gotten a lot of help from grants that I've been able to get and things like that.

Working to Improve Local Government

When I came on the board of supervisors, we were just doing line item budgets each year. Essentially, the CEO's of Monterey County had previously been sort of procurement officers. They knew the cost of everything and would present budgets to the board that gave choices for cuts in procurement, like cars and typewriters. Most local communities' budgets were just done that way. But I'd worked in the analyst's office in Sacramento and looked at the way the state did their budget, and it wasn't by line item. Here the supervisors and city councilmembers were accustomed to going through and saying, "Well, why do

we have to buy so many new cars this year?" Or there were typewriters and it was going to change from manual to electric typewriters. "How many electric typewriters are we going to get?" And you could then have your politics around, we're not going to give you as much as you're asking for. So essentially you could go to the voters and say, "We've cut, squeezed, and trimmed government." But it was all over personnel and equipment, rather than programs.

I said, "That's not the way you make decisions. You make decisions on, what do we want to carry out and what's the cost of doing that? It's going to require that you have to have office space and equipment, and you want your best kind of equipment, and you're going to have cars or vehicles or something, and you're going to have to have personnel. Let's look at the cost of that service and see whether it's of value to the community."

So we changed that from a line item budget to a program budget. And I think one of the counties that did it best in the state was Santa Cruz, because they involved the civilian community. You had the sixties, the anti-government group. And out of that came John Laird and Gary Patton and several others who went to the board of supervisors at the time and said, "Why don't you allow us to present an alternative budget for the board of supervisors?" They weren't members. They hadn't been in elected office yet. And there were a lot of progressives who said, "When you're going to think about putting money into the criminal justice system, we're going to suggest that maybe you ought to invest in some of the prevention programs that the nonprofits here are running, and the county can buy those services without having to hire them as

employees.” So Santa Cruz, I think, sort of set the stage for the whole state of California on how do you make your buck go a lot further and incorporate the communities into the services that are delivered. The women against domestic violence, or Grey Bears feeding the hungry, things like that, would also have to rely on their own private contributions. Second Harvest Food Bank is probably the most successful nonprofit in Santa Cruz County. But the governments, the cities and the county, could also help support them for receiving benefits from them. And that was a really radical concept at the time. Santa Cruz is probably one of the counties that does it the best in the state. Monterey County began changing its attitude, but still very conservatively.

The new Coastal Act required representatives from local governments to sit on regional commissions (four, I believe for the entire coast). And I was Monterey County’s representative. In order to get all these local coastal programs adopted, they had regional commissions. So essentially, instead of every permit in the state of California going to one body, the state board, they would allow these regional areas to review every one of those permits. So the Central Coast was a regional commission and each county had a representative from their board of supervisors appointed by their colleagues on the board. And I was appointed by the colleagues on my board, until I came back and I kept reporting that a lot of the permits we’d voted on at the board level were rejected by the regional Coastal Commission because they were so poorly permitted. I said to my board, “The Coastal Commission has far less staff but they actually go to visit the sites. They take pictures of it. They give you a report. Our staff is not giving us the

kind of information we need to do a good job. Had we gotten that information, we wouldn't have made the decision we made."

So after a year or so of hearing my criticism of my county, the board decided, "Let's just kill the messenger. We don't like what Farr is doing. So we're going to take him off the regional commission and put another colleague on." So I got bounced. It was a good learning of politics. I probably could have been a lot more diplomatic in how I presented the conflict.

My district is one of the most important parts of the California coastline. I look back on it and I was at the right place at the right time to protect this county. And I knew that Santa Cruz would be protected under their politics. They had a new progressive political board. We shared a lot at these regional commissions: the Air Board meetings, AMBAG, (the Association of Monterey Area Bay Area Governments), regional garbage districts, transportation commissions and so on.

Working to Stop Offshore Oil Drilling and to Establish the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

I learned a lot about local governance and also a vision for where we want to go, where we want to be in the future to protect our resources. I think those views were the modern foundation for the political ethos of our counties. This was first started by my father and his buddies on master planning the coast using scenic highways, parks and easements, tools that young progressives like Gary Patton and I used to stop the Lease Sale 58, offshore oil drilling under President Carter. We started a big campaign against it and that campaign, over the years, ended up becoming the campaign to promote the National Marine Sanctuary. What we

were looking at is the federal government can drill and drill, and they can mine, and they can do all this stuff right off our coastline. Are there any other federal options to that?

And fortunately, a very close friend of mine, Jim Rote, who had worked here in the state legislature but took a job with the National Marine Fisheries in Washington, D.C.—he called me in 1978 and said, “Carter is about to release this lease sale proposal for Northern California.” My reaction was, “He’s got to be nuts. There’s no oil in Northern California. It’s all in Southern California.” He said, “No, the government owns the entire ability to lease lands, and what they’ve done is they’ve had a “call for nominations” from the private oil drillers, and they’ve got more bids than they’ve ever had on any offshore oil drilling. And so it is real. The oil companies think there’s oil there and it’s right off Santa Cruz and Año Nuevo. You guys ought to know about this stuff.”

So that was sort of the Paul Revere of offshore oil drilling, that whole moment. I had never held press conferences but I said, “My god, I’ve got to announce this.” So I just asked the press that was there for the board of supervisors [meeting], I said, “If you’ll stay for a moment after the board meeting is over, I’ve got a very important announcement to make on some federal actions that are going to take place.”

And that is when the shit hit the fan and everybody just said, “No, you can’t drill here.” It was our reaction, “You can’t do this.” And we finally decided, “How are we going to stop it?” We had some very prominent people who had been active in national Democratic politics, one gentleman who actually was developing the

Carmel Valley Ranch, a large development in Carmel Valley. He was a fellow named Jerry Barton. He was the president/CEO of Landmark Lands Company, the developer. They did golf course resort places. He'd been a committeeman for the National Democratic Party and was a very close friend of Cecil Andrus, who was the secretary of the interior under Carter. He invited Cecil to come out to his house. We had Senator Alan Cranston there, and Congressman Leon Panetta there, and myself. I remember also the tennis player Arthur Ash was there—I have a photograph of him—oh, he was a great tennis player. So it was a lot of the Who's-Who around here. And we really laid it on Cecil Andrus not to allow this lease sale to go forward. And when he finally announced the lease sales, he excluded this area. We won, and thought it was over.

But then Carter was defeated. Reagan comes in. He appoints James Watt to be secretary of interior. And Watt's first announcement is, "We're going to drill, baby, drill on every coast there is. And the whole coast of California is open." So after we decide to put this thing to bed, it now resurrects itself, in an even worse shape than what we had killed.

And that's when—we had tried [earlier] to float the idea of a National Marine Sanctuary as an alternative, but nobody was listening at the time. And the fishermen were very much opposed to it.

Reti: Who is "we" who was floating the idea of a sanctuary earlier?

Farr: Gary Patton and myself. And some other locals like Les Sternad of the Coastal Commission—we had sort of found this tool in the federal toolbox. We were curious about whether there was another way to do this. Fight fire with

fire. We had a national energy crisis. Oil was needed. The question is, do we take it all now from the coast? Can we hold it, put it into an oil reserve or use other federal options for coastal marine waters? If you're going to propose oil, let's try saving it. Can we do it?

But we didn't get much traction at the federal level at first, although we really had a good list and a good ground operation to get this petition against the lease sales in Carter administration. So what we did is we just fired this up again. This was getting the whole state involved now, because everybody was scared. That's when Leon Panetta was asked, and I think David Packard had a lot to do with it. I never found this out for sure. David Packard had been the former undersecretary of defense for Reagan, and now both of his daughters had got him interested in building the [Monterey Bay] Aquarium. One of the interesting things about the Aquarium is it was the first aquarium in the country to actually use ocean water, rather than making their own salt, which most aquariums do. They needed the nutrients from the ocean to grow the kelp, because they were the first aquarium to start growing kelp, and their big, famous tank is the kelp forest tank. You need fresh ocean nutrients to feed it. So I think, in their economic interest, it was going to be very threatening if you ever had an oil spill, or had oil polluting this bay—the water which the aquarium needed for their survival.

So the powers-that-be got Leon interested in creating a National Marine Sanctuary, and he was able to tack it on as an earmark, the emergency bailout for Hurricane Andrew in Florida. The earmark said there would be a Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The rules of what that sanctuary was going to be,

whether it was going to be totally protectionist, or whether it was going to grandfather in existing uses, and whether it could even allow oil drilling, and the size of the sanctuary all was left up to NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association] to implement after public hearings. So, the initial threat, the killing of that initial threat, the revival of that threat, and then the shifting of that threat into creating the National Marine Sanctuary, all grew out of that 1978 announcement by President Carter.

Reti: That's fascinating because I interviewed Dan Haifley about that whole piece of the story, the fight for the sanctuary that was established under President Bush, all the politics that went into that accomplishment.^{xxx} But I hadn't heard about the earlier chapter.

Farr: Well, what was fascinating too, about the Bush thing, is that Pete Wilson was the senator then, from California, and when the first President Bush was up for re-election, running against Clinton, Wilson had a conversation with him about, "You know this proposed sanctuary on the California coastline, Big Sur and everything. It's gotten a lot of attention." He said, "If I were you, I'd endorse it and I'd endorse the bigger option."

Reti: The largest boundaries for the sanctuary.

Farr: He said, "Because that will gain you as an environmental president. You got to carry California and this will be it, because you've now saved the Big Sur coastline." Bush said, "Well, aren't we going to tick off our friends in the oil industry?" Pete Wilson said, "You know, the amount of oil out there is not that big, in the big picture. You can sacrifice it. And frankly, the oil companies say it's

going to be very expensive to get the oil out.” So Senator Wilson made this behind-the-scenes argument to win California voters.

So Bush comes out and makes this ad in the campaign that he’s the environmental president, and he shows pictures of the Big Sur coastline that he’s going to save. The irony is that when his son gets elected and they start this “Drill, baby, drill,” we’re telling him, (laughter) “If you pull that, we’re going to pull your dad’s ad out showing where he protected the coast, and now you’re going to destroy it?”

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: Fortunately, the sanctuary law that we adopted actually prohibited oil drilling, and it’s the only sanctuary that actually has statutory protection from oil drilling. And the fact that we made the sanctuary boundaries cover the oil fields off of Año Nuevo was significant.

Gary Patton did something that I think was genius. I was in the state legislature at the time. But before going to the state legislature, I was active in the county supervisors—we had a rump group of county supervisors—progressive, young people who wanted to do a lot more than the traditional PTA meetings of the board of supervisors. And he was able to organize his county supervisors all along the coastline to adopt, through their zoning powers, prohibitions on allowing any development in their counties that would assist with offshore oil drilling. So you cannot go to the ocean without having docking, and without having supplies, and without having support systems onshore. If you’re going to have a pipeline it’s got to come from shore out to the wells and bring the oil back.

So this subtle, little petition among electeds went around coastal counties—nobody was paying attention to this. And each county put their zoning amendment up for a vote, to lock it in, so it could only be changed by an election. It couldn't be changed by the next board of supervisors. It only could be changed by a vote of the people. I don't know if every single coastal county in California adopted it, but I think most of them did.

Reti: Most of them, yes.

Farr: So even if all goes to hell at the federal level and somebody decides—and I don't think we're moving that way at all—but if they decide that we're going to drill, baby, drill—they cannot, these oil companies cannot get out there from shore. They can't use the California coastal counties. Now, Santa Barbara has been interested in trying to get some new, fresh oil drillers to clean up the mess of old ones and to give a lot of money to the environmental organizations. Essentially, let's modernize what is already there. They've got seepage problems and everything. But those efforts so far haven't been successful politically.

I think we've killed, for the foreseeable future, the cost effectiveness of offshore oil drilling in California. Particularly with oil being at a very low price, this is a very expensive operation. And there's a lot cheaper oil in a lot of other areas that oil companies will be interested in, rather than trying to get into the ocean on our coastline. Other states, Gulf states, I'm not so sure about.

Reti: Did you work with the fishing community on these issues?

Farr: Yeah, I mean my dad was so popular with the fishing community. In fact, after this meeting, I'm meeting with a fisherman who's got some issues about fishing. But my dad was the one who created a fisherman's union, and got unemployment insurance for fishermen, had a fisherman's hall here. He spent a lot of time with the fishermen. He was their patron saint. He was their lawyer, and their senator, their politician. So I inherited a lot of that. And I love to fish. My dad was never a fisherman, but I grew up on the Monterey Wharf, fishing every day. I loved the nostalgia of the fishing community, and Cannery Row and so on. So I protect the fishermen as much as possible.

Sustainable Resource Management

I've always felt like we have to have best management practices. I've always felt this about commercial development. I'm not against commercial use—commercial uses of resources, farming practices, timbering practices—any of those things. Just, let's do it to the best standards that there are out there in the industry, and in cases where we can, push it to even a higher level. Santa Cruz County did that with timber harvesting, really essentially created the Sierra Club model for selective cutting of trees. Use the Santa Cruz model. And that was the model that was applied to northern Santa Cruz County, all of that forest being in private ownership.

Reti: Big Creek Lumber, the McCrary family.^{xiv}

Farr: Yeah, Big Creek. They essentially farm with helicopters, rather than just bulldozing in and cutting everything willy-nilly.

So the fishermen—to me it was, okay, we'll get you access to those fisheries. And even in the fight with the sanctuary—because I think what happened was the sanctuary came in here with a lot of young, eager staff thinking, “Okay, this is a sanctuary. We're going to limit the fishing.” I said, “That's not your role. We have other government agencies that regulate fishing in the state and federal waters. Let them do their job. And we have a National Marine Fisheries office and built a building for them in Santa Cruz, at Long's Marine Lab, at the campus out there.” I did do that as a congressman. And as a [state] legislator, I got the state lab built for the sea otter and marine mammal rescue center. In case of an oil spill, we have a medical rescue center. Henry Mello and I made sure that the spot for building that Fish and Game Wildlife Rescue Center was right there next to Long Marine Lab and no place else.

Santa Cruz as a Marine Research Cluster

In the nineties, a lot of interest was developing in coastal California. Before leaving the Assembly, I had authored a bill to do an economic inventory of the California coastline. We called the bill CORMA, the California Ocean Resources Management Act. It produced, under Governor Pete Wilson, the encyclopedia of coastal resources and value. It was the first of its kind.

So what happened here locally was the beginning of an interesting campus community in northern Santa Cruz County. Each of the facilities was sponsored by somebody else. The land was owned by UC. And they had their Long Marine Lab there, named to honor private donations from the Long family of Long's drugstore. And then along came State Fish and Game and built a state facility

right there on university lands. And then the federal government comes along and builds a National Marine Fisheries building there. And now they're doing a massive expansion. And then they had the private sector come and build the Seymour Marine Discovery Center. I've always been encouraged by that [endeavor]. This is what we ought to be doing, is bringing governments of all different sources, all interested in the same subject matter, on one campus. Because you get a lot of what I call parking lot discussions about, "What do you do in your building? Why don't you come over and have lunch with me and I'll show you what I do?" So you get all this synergism going on between professional people of like interests. That collaboration is priceless. And it's stronger than having one entity own everything on the campus. So I was really interested in a lot of that kind of clustering. I'm trying to do that in agriculture now here in Monterey County. I think it's a much more effective use of taxpayer money, and certainly you get a better bang out of your professional staff at all levels because they all do a lot more sharing, than having to read journals and go to conferences. You just walk across the street.

Reti: (laughs) And talk to somebody.

Farr: You know, Santa Cruz has really become an incredible marine hub because you've got the Marine Rescue Center and Long Marine Lab specialized in marine mammal research. And now you've got all the infrastructure. The biggest veterinary shop for marine mammals, I think in California, is there, paid for by the state. And then Moss Landing is essentially a chemistry school in ocean warming. Marine centers have their specialties and Stanford has been very much into neurology and the enzymes of animals in the ocean, essentially with the

research that's going on at Stanford Medical School. And they're using a lot of the research on marine organisms who are millions of years older than land life, interesting marine organisms that develop immunities that land animals haven't developed yet. Can we learn from that? In a liquid environment, the neurology of all these incredible creatures, and how does that relate to the human brain, and stem cells. I think it's phenomenal. We have all these centers of excellence in marine science that are world-renowned. And they are all on Monterey Bay.

The Blue Economy, Ecological Tourism, and Watchable Wildlife

Reti: And your dad—didn't he achieve some of the first protections of the intertidal zone?

Farr: Yes, that was very interesting. Yeah, my dad created the first underwater state park, I think in America, which was off Point Lobos. Now it's kind of popular with marine sanctuaries and things like that. We didn't have access to it. Nobody was snorkeling or diving in those days.

Reti: When you were a kid, no.

Farr: No, there was no access to the underwater, only TV movies by Jacques Cousteau. My dad's idea was just visionary about, someday, somebody will be there. I mean, Jules Verne's submarine will take you. You had glass bottom boats in Pacific Grove where you could look at the ocean. You never thought about getting into the cold ocean offshore. It was just sitting on a boat and having a window essentially, like a face mask. You could sit on these and they put curtains over you, so you were in a dark setting. And then they would row

around and you could look down into the water and see the floor and the shallows, and the fish and everything. Glass-bottom boat rides were a big, big tourist attraction up until people started manufacturing face masks and wetsuits and people could actually snorkel, get in the water and go look for themselves. That became much more attractive.

Reti: What other things were going on during your period of being on the board of supervisors with what they call “the Visitor Economy”?

Farr: I grew up in Carmel and as kids in Carmel we used to yell, “Go home, tourists.” We felt that they were an invasion of our privacy, an invasion of our town. As I got older, and realized the economics of a community and how governments survive, I realized, wow, this tourist dollar is a pretty interesting dollar because it comes here and it supports the jobs, and it leaves behind taxes, and we don’t have to have urban sprawl to get money in here. We don’t have to do anything. They stay in hotels, and they’re only here for a couple of days, and then they go. They’re not in our schools and they’re not on our roads a lot. It’s sort of the minimal environmental impact. Maybe we ought to have more of them, get more money, and use tourist dollars to make our cities better.

But those were the days, also, when everybody lived in the city. And this is one of my biggest frustrations—and I don’t know when it [began]—whenever the idea [arrived] that you could “commute to work.” The commute concept that you didn’t actually have to live near your job has ruined our communities. Because when I grew up, I mean, other than in big cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco, where it was necessary to commute, but even in the cities, often

people would walk to work, or they'd take a bus. In Carmel, everybody walked. And when I grew up in Carmel—I think back on all the employees at the La Playa Hotel, and the Pine Inn, your low-income, blue collar jobs, they owned houses or rented in Carmel. If you had a job in Monterey, you lived in Monterey. You lived in the city you worked in. So tourism was a great addition to helping those local economies become even stronger.

I think what I started realizing is that we need to do is capitalize on it, and I don't think we've done a very good job of it yet today. You start studying all the economics about sales and taxes and everything. It's all numbers. And it's based on growth, and based on investment in building something and getting return for your buck. I said, "Well what about the investment in just saving something like sea otters? Does that have an economic value?" I always kidded Margaret Owings, who did the Save the Sea Otter initiative.³⁶ She did it by private initiative, got the voters to save the sea otter. And right after that, she did the initiative to save the mountain lions. This was one woman who did incredible political work, sort of very innocently, just knew all the right people and got the investment in the politics to get it done. She did a marvelous job. And I always kidded her. I said, "Margaret, you did more for the economy on the Monterey Peninsula than anybody." She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Look at all the T-shirts that have otters on them, all the little stuffed animals that people are selling, tourists buying cameras and binoculars, paying gate fees at Pebble Beach, renting rooms at Post Ranch. It's all about 'watchable wildlife—'"

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: “—all the necklaces and bracelets. You just spurred this whole economy for artisans to design these things, and people to manufacture them and sell them in our stores. It all happened because you saved the sea otters!” She said, “I never thought of it that way.”

And we’ve seen that really, really clearly and just demonstrably. It’s a wonderful economic model. Davenport and Monterey and Point Lobos were each big whaling centers. We were killing whales as fast as we could in this bay. Now, we don’t kill whales anymore but we go out and watch them. We’re making so much more money off watching whales than we ever did off killing whales.

Reti: Back in the seventies, I don’t remember there being very many whales out here.

Farr: No, everywhere that the whales swam they were being killed, so since the international whaling commissions and crackdowns started shutting this stuff down, we’ve seen a reproduction and growth of the whales. It’s really been to our economic benefit.

Reti: Yes, now we’re making international news with our humpback whales every summer.^{vi}

Farr: Yeah, well again “Watchable wildlife.” I remember when this book *Megatrends: Ten Directions Transforming Our Lives* by John Naisbitt came out in 1982. He was a California economist who predicted the future. There was a whole chapter on what they called Watchable Wildlife. It was about how more

people are watching wildlife than are watching all the national sports—all the football, baseball, basketball—everything. I said, that's a shocking figure.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And, of course, they were using the nature channel, the National Geographic channel. And then they were looking at the sport sales figures for coats and binoculars and everything you do outdoors. And then, look at all the people signing up to go river rafting, and doing any outdoor sports. There is an incredible economic base out there that suggests that you're going to get a better bang out of your buck saving something and making it accessible to people, than by cutting it down or killing it, and not making it accessible. I think what we have done here on the Central Coast is really getting into this passive economic development through environmental preservation. If you save the coast, and don't put billboards, and don't make it just a big commercial experience driving from Carmel to San Simeon, people will come and stay in hotels and eat in restaurants and leave some money behind. You have to just keep it preserved. I think now there's some interest in, maybe we ought to save sharks, too. Now that we're going to be able to monitor them, maybe that becomes watchable wildlife, in a sense. Where are they? Will we make more money off saving sharks than killing sharks? I think that those things have to be examined. And fortunately, we have a center here now, the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, that's created the Center for the Blue Economy, with a master's degree program teaching kids how to assess, in economic terms, the value of all of these things, and to put it together for decision makers.

I think this next decade you're going to see environmental economics be able to compete with Wall Street economics. Rather than timbering this area, what is more valuable? Saving it and providing access to it? Will people visit? Is it valuable? I think you can economically argue that your best investment is not to cut it down, but to leave it standing. Not tearing down a historical building, leaving it standing. I think you can have some real serious economics that compete with an alternative. I think that we will see that we get a better bang for our buck by not tearing it down and rebuilding it, or cutting it down and reforesting, or whatever. I mean, it's shifted from, "Tree hugger. I love you trees and I love you fuzzy animals, so don't hurt them," to a future about economic values. I think we've shown by defeating offshore oil drilling that we're getting a much better bang for a lot more people out of preserving this coast, and in the process interpreting, telling people where they can go and what they can do. The next frontier will be developing apps on your iPhone to explain all that's around you. It is so much more exciting to interpret reality rather than invent fantasy.

And that's why this Coastal Trail that I'm really interested in building around the bay. We're in the process now of finalizing investments to get it done. It's going to cost about eighty million bucks and nobody has eighty million dollars for building trails. But there are little monies there and monies there, and foundation grants. You build it segmentally. I think that trail from Santa Cruz to Monterey Peninsula is going to be the number one attraction on the Central Coast. It will far exceed the amount of people that are going to the Monterey Aquarium and the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. Not that people will walk or ride the entire trail. But they'll do it segmentally because it will be an outdoor

experience with interpretation about: why are waves here; why are you surfing here? What are those animals? How did Native peoples live here?

Reti: So there will be signs along the way?

Farr: Oh, there will be interpretive signs. They've already designed those. There will be signs about the fields: why do artichokes grow here and not in Bakersfield or Kansas? Who grew these artichokes? How did they get here? Who were the people living here thousands of years ago? They lived along the coast. What did they do for a living? Who were the immigrants, the people who first came here, and what nationalities were they? Where did they come from, what parts of the world? I mean, the Chinese fishermen taught us about squid fishing. It wasn't the Italians and the Portuguese? So we'll have all that history that we've collected in the place that California began. That trail will be a living museum of history and present-day activity that will make it so exciting. Anyway, we got off on that. All these things came out of being on the board of supervisors and learning about the coast.

The Impact of Proposition 13 at the Local Level

Reti: A couple of other things I have down here to ask you—this is a big one—the effects of Proposition 13 during that period. That passed in [June] 1978.^{xvii}

Farr: Yeah, I was chairman of the board of supervisors that year. I had worked in the state legislature and I had done constitutional amendments in the state legislature. So I was really knowledgeable about Constitutional tax policy, probably more so than almost anybody in the state legislature. What I had

learned, what I realized very quickly, is because property taxes were managed solely at the local level—there was no state agency involved. Each county had an assessor’s office whose responsibility each year was to go out and find out what the fair market value was of all the real estate within their county, in both urban and incorporated areas, and come up with the assessed value of real estate. And then it was up to the governments to just levy a rate, a tax rate, according to the needs of that government. So essentially, what you did as a local government is you looked at all your sources of income—your sales tax, other sources other than property tax, any other revenues you might have from fees, like parks, filing papers, etc., or anything like that. Think about all the rentals and stuff that the governments have. And they would add all that income up and then they would say, “Oh, we still have this gap because now we need to fund this budget that the board or city council has adopted, which is essentially not a runaway budget, but whatever the gap was—how much money do we need to raise from property taxes to do that?” Local government electeds would set a tax rate to collect the difference.

Reti: Oh, that was how they came up with that figure?

Farr: This is before Prop 13.

Reti: This is before Prop 13, before the change.

Farr: So then you’d set what they called the tax rate, a percentage of the assessed value of your residential or commercial property. The value of coastal property in coastal counties was escalating at about 10 percent a year in those days. Politically, the electeds could say, “Look, we’re not charging as much money as

we did last year.” But the value of your property had gone up, so the taxpayer was saying, “But I’m paying more money in taxes.”

What happened is nobody would coordinate. So school districts would do this. The fire districts would do it. Everybody relied on property taxes—school districts, fire districts, cemetery districts, the county, special districts in the county, library districts within the county, and things like that. So you had about a dozen governments that were all setting these tax rates. And the cumulative effect on the taxpayer was— So, [they said], “We asked government to cut, squeeze, and trim. And they all tell me they are. But the bottom line of my tax bill has gone up 10 percent.” Well, the value of your property went up 10 percent.

So Jarvis and Gann got together to start a statewide ballot initiative, which became known as Proposition 13 on the 1978 primary election ballot. They sort of initiated this cut, squeeze, and trim property taxes movement. They’d tried it for a couple of years on the statewide ballot but failed. But that’s where they got their name. And they never had any standing because they were kind of looked at as—we’d lose so much revenue at the local level and this is kind of a wacky idea anyway.

But tax rates were becoming a huge thing on the coast. People were scared to death that this was never going to stop and that they were going to be taxed out of their income levels. In 1978, Jarvis and Gann were at the right place at the right time with the right suggestion, which was: let’s dump the entire system we have and just make it 1 percent of the value of your house at the time you sell your

house because that's when the market really knows the value of your house, when you sell it. And for those of you who live in homes in 1978, we'll roll it back to the assessed value of 1975. I bought my house in 1975, so the amount that I paid for it, \$150,000, is what my tax bill is based on. Whereas the house next door later sold for over a million dollars, so their tax base—and the unfairness of Prop 13, is the disparity between [similar] properties, who receive exactly the same amount of the services, but one pays a lot more than the other, depending on the price paid, no services given.

And the other disparity is that it's shifted the burden for property taxes, which used to be borne by commercial buildings because they were the most valuable buildings. But once you've frozen the tax level at a 1975 level, if that commercial building didn't change hands— So the tax base has shifted in California from a commercial property majority of the taxes, to now a residential—because the residential houses are turning over a lot faster.

Reti: Wasn't there an attempt to exempt commercial property from Prop 13?

Farr: When the initiative started and all the people were lining up to sign the initiative—I mean, it was a phenomenon, it really was. It was one of those times where this was the way you could protest. You didn't care about the outcome. You didn't even know if the initiative was going to pass. But people wanted to sign it to show their frustration with the system, a political road rage much like the Trump vote.

So I was on the board of supervisors trying to explain all this stuff, why this initiative was going to be harmful. And nobody would take it. They just said, "I

don't want to listen anymore." Very late in the campaign, the legislature got into the act and created their alternative to Prop 13 that would have had a less chaotic effect. The legislature put their proposition on the ballot. But by then, the momentum was already for the initiative, Proposition 13.

It was numbered Prop 13 because it was the last initiative proposition that qualified that year. So it qualifies by number—the first one would be Prop 1, and then Prop 2, and so on. They had thirteen propositions. And the legislative ballot initiatives always go on the ballot first. The legislature proposes amendments to the constitution. So this was an initiative. So it became Prop 13.

Creating the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District

The irony is that was the same year that I'd worked so hard to create a Monterey Peninsula Water Management District. I was on the board of supervisors. Henry Mello was the state assembly member. I'd gotten the bill drafted, as a former staffer of the state legislature, by getting permission from then-assemblyman Frank Murphy, who was the Republican assemblyman from Santa Cruz County. He was retiring and Mello was running for his seat. Mello had been a county supervisor in Santa Cruz County. And Frank Murphy gave me the permission to get what they call a "pre-print" of this water bill. So I went and did that.

And I sort of handed it to Henry Mello, saying, "Now that you're in office you can introduce this bill." Well, he wasn't about to, "I'm not going to take orders from this upstart supervisor in Monterey County. I'm going to find my own way."

Reti: (laughs) Yeah.

Farr: So Henry did due diligence. And he did introduce the bill. He tweaked it. One of this tweaks was that it would have to be passed by the voters. The legislature can create a new government [entity]. They don't have to have voter approval for that. They are elected to do those things. They can create government. But Henry, because of some local pushback against creating a new local government, wanted local voter support. And the irony is that the new district would need a tax base from local property taxes. So Henry insisted it be on the ballot.

So Prop 13 was: "Vote against government. Vote against tax rates. Cut your taxes." And the next proposition on the local ballot was a local measure: "Create the Monterey Peninsula Water District and give it a tax rate." And the voters did both! (laughs) Cut and create at the same time.

Reti: (laughs) Very interesting.

Farr: (laughing) They sort of eliminated government with Prop 13 and then created a brand-new government with Measure 1A, or whatever the number was.

I think the significant issue here is not only in land use planning, but also in what we did in creating the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District. I think that was really genius politics on my part (laughs). But I also had the help of State Director of Water Resources Bill Gianelli, who had retired to Pebble Beach. He'd been the director of State Water Resources under Ronald Reagan, so he was

the water czar of California. His name was—if you knew water, you knew Bill Gianelli. He got involved in this. We had a drought. We also had this moratorium on the water company here issuing water meters.

Reti: 1976, 1977 was the height of a California drought.^{xviii}

Farr: Mm, hmm. We had a drought but no way to manage it. I am the county supervisor. We have this private water company—Cal Am—whose jurisdiction served an area—and if you can imagine a circle, what the PUC [Public Utilities Commission] did is say, “Everything inside that circle is stopped. You can deliver water but you can’t give any more meters.” Outside this circle, which was under county jurisdiction, it was, “Oh, go get a well permit and drill a well.”

So I said, Well, this is crazy. If we have a drought, we don’t have any management. We had no way of figuring out, how do you manage the water use? Cal Am had no authority in law to tell their customers—they could charge you if you used more water, and they could suggest that you have a water conservation plan, but there was no way they could implement it legally. Nor could the governments require you to put any water restrictive devices, conservation stuff. There was just no way of getting control of a runaway delivery and use system.

So I realized, to manage water delivery and use at different sites across the region, we had to create a new government to do it because the county didn’t have the authority. Cal Am didn’t have the authority. Nobody had the authority. So that was why we created a water management district. When the legislature in Sacramento creates a special district, it’s usually just a local matter and it goes

on the consent calendar. There's no controversy. There was nobody raising controversy on this because they all knew we needed it. Today, however, everything becomes controversial. But not in those days.

I went up to testify with Bill Gianelli and the question came up as to why you want to call it a "water management district"? No one had created that kind of a name. The counties have the authority to create water districts but with some limited authorities. We need broad authorities. The Assembly Water Committee was going to block the name of the bill just because no one had ever had used that title before.

And I said, "Well, because we need broad legislative authority. We want to control everything that happens with water—from the time it falls out of the sky to as many times as you can use it—reclaiming sewage, reclaiming saltwater, whatever you want, anything you can do with water. We want it to be a water management district." We convinced them to keep the title. Along with Assemblyman Henry Mello's amendments on local election, and elected board members, it passed. The governor signed it. So we created the water management district.

Then I was on that original board. Bill Gianelli was the original chair. And immediately, there was a discussion of, how do we build a dam in the Carmel Valley? We had these dams on the Carmel River that had been built by private sector, Cal Am's predecessor, San Clemente Dam, (which we just tore down) and Los Padres Dam. The problem was San Clemente was already filling up with silt and had lost its purpose. So we ought to be able to build a dam somewhere in the

valley that is for just water purposes, but it would be big enough to have passive recreation on it—canoeing, nothing with motors on it but just paddling around, and having a park. That was the idea. Nobody was against doing those [dams] in those days. So the new water district did lots of studies on a new dam in Carmel Valley and spent a lot of money on it. And the district looked at all kinds of issues, like water hyacinth reclamation and all kinds of alternative water producing schemes, and finally decided the dam was the answer, and let's go to the voters for an advisory vote.

So instead of asking them to appropriate the money, we asked them whether they would support it, after they'd demanded that that's what the water district was to do: "Build us a dam. Get us some water." So the clients sent out an advisory vote mail ballot and we did it all by mail ballot. I think it was the first all-mail ballot election. I had to get legislation passed to do a mail ballot election. And guess what? The voters overwhelmingly *rejected* it! So they were saying, "Build a dam. But we don't want to pay for it." And that was the beginning of the question of this water management district: what purpose did it have? Well, it had a wonderful purpose because in the meantime it created a water budget for each city and unincorporated area inside the district boundaries, I think this was the first household water budget in the U.S.

I think this was a radical idea. What we said is, "We don't even know how much water we need if we build a dam because nobody knows how big our cities want to get. Where is this future growth? You are all involved in this future master planning. But some of you are way behind on it, and others—" So we actually pulled them all into a room and said, "Monterey, what is your growth vision?"

They were going to go all the way to the edge of Salinas, through Highway 68. Seaside said, "We're going to be as big as Monterey. We'll go out to Fort Ord." Marina said, "We're going to take over—" So they were just doing all this stuff without any thought of what the total implications would be.

We said, "There's no way in the world we can provide enough water to do all that. We've got to do something immediately. We've got to have a formula immediately because we cannot deliver any more water than we have stored in the dams and in the wells that they have in the valley. We just cannot do that. We know what our maximum amount of water delivery is and we've got to now fit all the use of the Monterey Peninsula to that level of 16,000 acre feet."

So we had to go back and tell these towns, "There's no way you're going to grow— How much have you grown in the last five years? Let's project that out for the next five, ten years. That's realistic. That's all you get."

And Carmel said, "Well, we're not expanding at all. We'll live with what water we have right now. We don't need any additional water." So the Water District board ended up giving each community a water budget. This had never been done before. We said, "This is how much water you get. Now, you decide the building permits. So if you're going to build a laundromat or a car wash that's going to be water consuming, that's fine, but it's got to come out of your city allocation. So you're going to have some savings someplace, so you can rob Peter to pay Paul. And by the way, these houses that want to expand, you can't just let them have more water."

So what this shifted was the whole attitude about water conservation, putting it *into* the building permits. Cal Am went out and had to assess all of their users: “How many people live in your house?” Because it was going to be based on per capita water consumption, not how big your house or how small it was, which was smart. Everybody filled those questionnaires out. I don’t think there was much cheating. There was no need to cheat. And then you were given a water budget. So now when that house sells and the new owner comes in and says, “There was only one person living here. Now there are five and I want to change it. I want to build a new bathroom and I want to build a new kitchen,” the water management agency says, “Fine. How are you going to do that on the budget of one person? You’re going to have to conserve so much. You’re going to have to buy the most efficient—maybe you don’t need a dishwasher?”

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: You know, “Just figure out how to use less water. And change all your showers.” And we’ve done that all over the place. We’ve retrofitted.

The bottom line after this has been implemented now for twenty-five, thirty years, we have the lowest per capita water use in the United States.

Reti: Really! I didn’t know that.

Farr: They stopped the restaurants from just putting water out. You have to ask for it. I mean, nothing really changed. We just got into a mentality, a business mentality of saving water: less use, less waste.

Reti: And did that become a model for other counties in California?

Farr: I don't know how many have come and copied— Well, then Mello was asked by Santa Cruz County, the Pajaro Valley Management District, to create similar legislation. He lived in Watsonville. So he just took the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District and just changed the name, with the same powers. And then the county of Monterey came along and wanted to upgrade all their ancient powers of water use. So essentially, it's been duplicated locally twice.

Reti: The county of Monterey?

Farr: The county of Monterey has duplicative powers. We have a special district on the Peninsula, but the county has all those authorities. But nobody on the Peninsula wants to give those authorities to a county board of supervisors that elects people from King City, and north county—Salinas—they have three votes and could overwhelm—

So this is part of this political divide that has been historically here since development began. That divide started when the Spaniards and the Mexicans ruled.

Monterey gotten beaten up a lot. It was kind of looked at in early history as the county seat for this county called Monterey, which included all of San Benito County and today's Santa Cruz County. But Monterey was beaten up because it was sort of a lazy town. It just didn't care about doing a lot of stuff. And so, as special interests developed in the Salinas Valley, in agriculture—Monterey was a fishing town, a coastal town—they wanted to wrestle away the county seat from Monterey to the city of Salinas. At the same time, San Benito County said,

“Monterey is too far away. We have nothing in common with them. We want out. We want to create our own county.” So the Salinas ag guys got together with San Benito County and they said, “If you’ll support us getting the county seat in Salinas, we’ll support you in your de-annexing from Monterey County.” And the same thing happened with Santa Cruz. Sandy Lydon has written—he has a whole almost lecture series on how Santa Cruz became a county in the legislature of a thousand drinks. Essentially, Santa Cruz fraudulently made petitions to the state legislature and they paid no attention to the fact that most of those petitions had people who were dead, or the same name was signed hundreds of times. (laughs) So they voted to create Santa Cruz County. The City of Monterey lost out in this. We’re still the place where California began. But the county seat is now in Salinas.

Reti: And the capital left as well.

Farr: They never had the Anglo capital in Monterey in the American period. Monterey was the capital for Spanish rule and Mexican rule, but not U.S. rule as a state.

Reti: A different time.

So looking back at your political career, what would you say that you learned from your time as a Monterey County supervisor?

Farr: Well, my feeling was we had [too many] specialized governments that we had that were no longer cost effective in the taxpayer sense. For example, the regionalization of sewer districts made sense. I thought we could put all the

sewer management under the new water management district. But for every little sewer district, there's a personality behind it and a board of directors behind it. And the biggest story here is what happened with the Pebble Beach Sanitary District, which had needed a board of directors. The Pebble Beach Sanitary District only owned a pipeline. They sent their sewage to Carmel Sanitary District for processing and they paid Pebble Beach to have their percentage of sewage processed in Carmel and then dumped into the ocean. A grand jury review suggested that's a government that doesn't need to exist. They could consolidate into the Carmel Sanitary District. Or all of these little Pacific Grove, Seaside sanitary districts could all consolidate into the water management district and have one stop. But they all resisted ever becoming part of the Monterey Water Management District. So Pebble Beach and Carmel are still separate districts. The others formed a regional district that has the plant out in Marina. Still, the government created to manage all aspects of water has no authority over sewer districts whose board members won't let go.

I think creating the water management district was really historically significant and has played a huge role in the future of this area because it's the first time that we wrestled with decision making about water. For the first time in Peninsula history, water decisions are made in public. Business is transparent. To see how bad private management was earlier, read *River in Ruin*²⁶. Before, Carmel and Pacific Grove, and Monterey—all had to have permission from the people that own the water, which is a private real estate group—deciding whether we were going to give water to Monterey. Realtors would come in and say, "We want to build a little minor community here in Carmel," and so on.

Reti: Wait a minute, the water rights belonged to a private real estate group?

Farr: Oh, yeah. When Del Monte Hotel was built, when the Pacific Improvement Company built the Del Monte Hotel, they had to have to water for that huge establishment. So they built the infrastructure in the Carmel Valley. They built the water infrastructure. There's a whole book written on this called *River in Ruin*. It gives a wonderful history of water development. But it stops before the creation of the water management district. It needs another chapter on how we took back the politics of water. The fight still goes on, as a group now wants the water district to buy out Cal Am, which says it's not for sale.

The book points out how people even had to fight—two women bought a lot in Carmel, schoolteachers, to build a house, and they had to live on that lot in tents for over a year, with a promise by the realtor, when he sold them the lot, that he could get them water. And then he had to go out and beg to get these women water for their lot. Finally, it became such a scandal that one lot was given water at a price. “Okay, only that lot can have water.” I don't know what penalty they had to pay, or price.

So water is the politics, but it used to be handled without any transparency, without any public policy. It was just, “You want to build this? Go to the water company. If you can make a sweetheart deal, you can build it.” The water management district didn't change the ownership of water. It just made it all transparent, as to who gets it, and how is it used, and the fact that we're going to now manage that private deal making by having to get a permit, a water permit

from the public water management district. And with that permit you could go get a meter from the Cal Am company.

The Power of Local Government

Reti: But what would you say that you learned about the political process from being on the board of supervisors?

Farr: I came to the board of supervisors a little bit arrogant because I was thirty-three years old. I had been a staff member in the legislature during the Unruh years and the Moretti years, and the Reagan years. I was doing constitutional amendments, which was the governance of the whole state. So I came here thinking I knew everything. I knew nothing, because I knew nothing about local government. I knew nothing about fire districts, and school districts, and water districts, and cemetery districts, and boards of supervisors, and planning commissions, and LAFCO, and regional water districts, air boards—all this stuff which is essentially the machinery of government at the local level. It is the government that we all face every day. We don't face state government, or face federal government. And it is so powerful, particularly a board of supervisors—almost every board except San Francisco is five people. And you are the executive branch of government, in that you hire the county administrative officer, and you hire all the department heads. You are the management, or you're the executive role of government. You're the legislative branch because you adopt these ordinances that create the zoning and the master planning and anything else that goes on in any of these fields. All of that has to be law-based and has to have authorities at the local level. So you are the legislature for that.

And because you listen to appeals from the assessment appeals board for real estate values that are too high or wrong, and you listen to appeals from the planning commission, you are a quasi-judicial government.

So you have executive, legislative, and judicial powers in a board of five people, three of which are a majority. So if you can get along with three people on your philosophies and political ideas—you know, I'll help you. You'll help me. Our idea is we're going to save this place—you have more power than Sacramento and Washington, D.C. ever can.

Do you know the LA Board of Supervisors—people leave Congress to run for the board of supervisors. Hilda Selese, who was an assemblywoman, then ran for Congress, was chosen by Obama to be secretary of labor. After Obama's first term, she left the position of secretary of labor and she went back and ran for the board of supervisors in LA county. Janice Hahn, who has been a congresswoman for about five, six years—she's leaving Congress this year to run for the LA county board of supervisors.

Reti: No kidding.

Farr: Why? It's a five-member board and it has a twenty-three billion dollar budget. Twenty-three billion. And each of those supervisors has lots of little communities that they represent, that make up LA county. And they have sort of a tradition that they each get about 5 million bucks (this is what I've heard; I've never examined the situation) (laughs) to sort of give out as—okay, you have a mayor of your little coastal community, or a little inland city, and they want something for their community and they go to the LA County Board of

Supervisors, and they've got their own earmarks that they can make for doling out that money. It's so powerful! Salaries are better, staffing is better, benefits are better. And the job is close to home, no commute. And you get to spend a lot of money.

So supervisors in California are incredibly powerful. It's the most powerful government in shaping the state, county by county, fifty-nine counties, counties that have no cities in them, like Mariposa County. The board of supervisors is the mayor and council for the city of Mariposa. Alpine County—only 2000 people live there. The board of supervisors is the only government in that county. And then you have LA County, which is one of the most populous counties in the United States. It's an interesting contrast. Each of them have a stake in what the future is, more so probably than the state legislature.

I think the vision for what California can be in terms of an educational system is with certainly the governor and the state legislature. The highway system and the state water system. But the quality of life of a community, in terms of how big it is and how functional it is, is left up to local governments. So I'm a big fan. I learned from being a supervisor, and being chair of AMBAG, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments, and being chair of LAFCO, the Local Agency Formation Commission—I learned a lot about local politics, just how important these local governments are. Also about how there are too many of them and they need to be consolidated. But that's difficult politics.

Reti: Well, I think that's a great place to stop for today. I want to respect your time. But next time, which will be August 10, we'll continue by talking about

your years in the state legislature, unless you have more you want to say about this part of your life.

Farr: I would just summarize that the things that I think that are big in what I learned here were: local governance, the most important. Secondly, implementing that in sort of a regionalization of water management. Also, the development of these local coastal programs, which are today the operating plan. They haven't changed. They finally got adopted after I left the board, but that was just the adoption. The details had all been done and were ready to go. Those still are the land use plans for the Monterey Peninsula and I'm very proud of that. Finally, I emphasized trying to create parks whenever we can. I got the Jack's Peak County Park and Garland Park—

Reti: Oh, those are great places.

Farr: Somebody asked, "Well, what do you want to be remembered for?" And I said, "I guess, if you look at all the parks I created as a supervisor, parks I created as a state legislator, and parks I created, including a national park, as a congressman—I'm the parks guy. The John Muir of the Central Coast." Fred Keeley deserves a lot of credit too.

Reti: (laughs) I love that, Sam. Okay. Well, thank you.

Reti: So today is August 10, 2016. This is Irene Reti and I am here with Congressman Sam Farr for the third of our interviews in his oral history on this, again, smoky morning in Monterey. I have my glass of water because the smoke [from the Big Sur Soberanes Fire] is getting to me a little bit, but I'm good. Sam,

let's start today by, why don't you tell me what inspired you to run for the state assembly. I know you came into office in 1980.

Farr: Well, I came into office as a county supervisor in 1975. I was appointed by Jerry Brown. And then I had to run in the next election, which was 1976. That was the year that I ran for the board of supervisors. I'd already been on it, so I was running as an incumbent. And Henry Mello ran for the first time for the state assembly in 1976 and Leon Panetta ran for Congress, the first time Democrats had been elected to these jobs. So the three of us got elected; we were a team for a long, long time. A fellow named Bob Nimmo—he was an assemblymember and then a state senator from San Luis Obispo County—he retired in 1980, so that left a vacancy in the state senate. Assemblyman Henry Mello in 1980 ran for the state senate against Eric Seastrand, who was a perennial candidate against Mello. That opened up Mello's assembly seat, so it was what they call an open seat, in 1980. I decided to run for it.

Running for the California State Assembly

So I was on the board of supervisors and active in everything around the bay, and sitting on the regional Coastal Commission, and the air board, the water boards, garbage boards, transportation boards—I mean, you name it, I was involved. I had good contacts in Santa Cruz County, particularly with Gary Patton. He and I sat on so many of those boards together. He was a supervisor from Santa Cruz County. He had ambitions to run and I had ambitions to run.

And we sort of talked about it one day and he just said, "You know, you're more moderate. I don't think I can get elected over in the Monterey Peninsula. My base

is in downtown Santa Cruz.” It was almost a flip-of-the-coin type of discussion. I think if he had insisted that he was going to run, I probably—because he had a stronger base in Santa Cruz than I did in Monterey. (Well, I don’t know, we sort of thought that. We hadn’t done any polling or anything. It was just an informal conversation.)

And then he said, “Why don’t you run?” And I said, “Well, I want to.” You know, I’d worked in the legislature, so it wasn’t like I was going to an unknown. I was going back to the place that I knew and lived in for seven years: Sacramento. I was very familiar, not only with my father’s heritage in the state senate and all the people he knew, some of whom were still in the senate, or had been in the assembly and now were in the senate. Term limits hadn’t started yet in California, so there were people in the senate who had been there for a long, long time, who had also served with my dad, even though he had been out of office since 1966, almost fifteen years. It was just natural for me. I felt very prepared for the job and really had learned local government.

Caught in a Political Battle for Speaker of the House

So I ran. It was an interesting campaign because it was an open seat. And in 1980, what happened at the state level is that the Speaker of the Assembly, Leo McCarthy from San Francisco, had been, for about a year or two, sort of suggesting that he’d like to run for higher office. And some of the Democrats in the assembly got really upset with him, saying, “You’re our leader. You’re supposed to help raise money. You’re supposed to be part of the assembly team,

not part of, you know—not, ‘I’ll lead you but I’ll use my position to raise money for my next campaign for higher office.’”

So he got challenged by a Southern Californian named Howard Berman. When I was a staffer there, I had worked for both of the gentlemen and was good friends with both of them. I knew Leo because he was from San Francisco and I was born there and lived there for a little while. But Howard was younger and much more involved politically, and was really a political character and a wonderful, kind person. I’d worked as a staffer tangentially on some reapportionment issues, so I knew all those people in the assembly. And Howard Berman called me and said, “I want to support you.”

What happened is that Howard challenged Leo McCarthy to take over to be Speaker of the Assembly. And it was thought that whoever got the most Democratic votes would then—you know the rest of the Democrats would—it would be a normal process where you fight the good battle and then whoever has the most votes wins.

As it turned out, that Speakership battle, the leadership battle, was national in scope because each side was just raining gobs of money to go after each other. So I’m a new kid on the block. I’m not in there yet. I want to get elected, then I’ll decide whether I’ll cast my vote for Leo or Howard. So the swing votes each side was after were going to be the new candidates in open seats. Of the Northern California seats, which all thought would go to Leo McCarthy from San Francisco, was also a new guy like me, Bob Campbell in Oakland, Piedmont, East Bay.

I just told both Leo and Howard, “First of all, I’ve got to get elected, or I’m irrelevant. So the only thing I’m interested in is getting elected, and I’ll decide who I’ll vote for after I get elected.” Well, they didn’t want to hear that. They wanted to know—“I’m going to give you money if you pledge your support for me.”

So what happened—and this is the background story—Henry Mello—Henry and I started off pretty cold. I mean, I was the county supervisor, I had worked in Sacramento; my father had been in politics. So I was the [Monterey] Peninsula kid that sort of had it all, in the political history. And he was the guy who wanted to run for these offices. And I kept giving him advice and he didn’t like it. I was younger. Henry, to his credit, he was a strong control guy. But he was a little jealous of me. He always thought I was going to run against him. It might have even been suggested by some down on the Peninsula in 1976 when he ran for the assembly that maybe I should just run for that. But no, I wanted to be on the board of supervisors.

So anyway, as it turned out, Henry’s chief of staff, a guy named Kevin Le Graf, who has lived here on the Monterey Peninsula, was very active, well known in the district. So Kevin decides to file against me to run for his boss’s seat. Henry is supporting Leo McCarthy. Through Henry, Kevin gets a lot of financial aid and professional campaign help from Leo McCarthy.

So I get the support of Howard Berman. Now, there aren’t many Northern Californians, new guys running for open seats, that are getting support from a Southern Californian. But my closest friends in the assembly were on Howard’s

side: Gary Hart from Santa Barbara; Bill Lockyer from the East Bay; some from the San Joaquin Valley. The only other person in Northern California who was getting the support of Howard Berman was Bob Campbell, also running for an open seat. So (laughs) I got to meet him over the telephone, "Like, how the hell are you handling this incredible pressure on us?"

Reti: (laughs) And you hadn't even gotten there. You were just running.

Farr: No. I'm in the primary. And I've got this chief of staff of Henry Mello running against me. Then, at the last minute, Bill Murphy, the former mayor of Watsonville, head of the chamber of commerce, and the county treasurer of Santa Cruz, he jumps in at the last minute because I think a lot of the old-timers in Santa Cruz said, "You know, these kids are from the Monterey Peninsula. We don't have anybody from Santa Cruz. You're so well-known up here and the bulk of the votes are in this county, so you could win the primary."

Well, he got in late. Probably, had he thought it out— I think he just jumped in. But I thought, here's a guy with all the credentials and all the connections to raise enough money to run a campaign. But he didn't run a very good campaign. And it ends up I win, which is what I wanted to do. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And then I'm the nominee, and I forget who, I think a gal named Ann Wexler, who was a choir teacher here in Carmel, was the Republican nominee.

So I win that election in 1980 and go to Sacramento. I'd worked on constitutional revision, and one of the revision articles we had was to shorten the time for lame

duck legislators, essentially instead of starting the year in January when the new year starts, and swearing everybody in, and then having to get offices and hire staff and sort of take several months, if you think about starting school. You know, get your committees; your committee chairmanships. We amended the constitution, saying that after the November election, that the new people would be sworn in on the first Monday in December, instead of January. Giving time in December to set up offices and hire staff would enable things to be ready to go in January when the new year starts.

Reti: Oh, in just a few weeks.

Farr: But the pressure was intense. And we had caucuses. The Democratic caucus would meet. I think we had forty-six Democrats, or maybe forty-seven. I think it tied at twenty-three votes for Berman and for Leo McCarthy twenty-three votes. One holdout—Tom Hannigan. Tom was a really principled guy, sort of the conscience of the legislature. And he just said, “You know, I like both you guys. I’m not voting on this. I’m opting out.” And everybody said, “Oh, you got to vote, Tom. You got to break the tie.” He said, “I’m not voting.” So we were sitting there arguing about how this was going to come out. Breaking the tie would mean all the Democrats would have to come together to elect the Speaker.

Meanwhile, Willie Brown, who was the cleverest of them all, he decides this is nuts. Obviously, he was on Leo’s side. So Willie goes to Carol Hallett, who is actually from this area and went to Carmel High School. She was the Republican leader. She was living in Atascadero at the time, I think. And Willie goes to her and says, “Carol, if you can get all the Republicans to vote for me, I can make up

the difference with my Democrats. And what I'll give you for it—" (the Republicans were the minority party and they never got anything)—he says, "I'll make your Republican members vice chair of every committee." Well, that's a nice title. It doesn't really mean a lot because you're not really going to chair the committees and decide how the substance is going to go. But it's a nice title to have. And he said, "And I will give you your proportional share of the assembly budget, so you can have all your staff. We're not going to try to cut, squeeze, and trim you from your responsibility of being the minority leader. You'll have all the financial benefits."

Willie always had a great sense of fair play. He said, "If you don't give people enough tools to do their job, then they'll be complaining about that all the time. And you'll never get your work done because they'll say, 'Oh, I'm not being paid enough—'" So, he said, "Give them what they need, and then we'll argue as professionals about whether your ideas are better than ours. But don't get off on these sidebar tracks."

So he was good at convincing Carol that she would give all her votes, unbeknownst to anybody. So while we're sitting in caucus arguing about how we were going to get a majority, because once you get a majority, and if Tom Hannigan would make a decision, then we'd have a majority, 24:23. And the losing side would have to give their votes because obviously we'd want to be a Democratic front.

Now, the tension was so great I don't think people were willing to say, "I'm just going to give up, even if my candidate loses, and just automatically vote for the

other side.” So that’s where Willie picked up and he comes in as the third-party option, as the alternative, with all these Republicans. And boom, he’s the Speaker. It just shocked the world. (laughs)

Reti: So that was the beginning of “Speaker Willie Brown”?

Farr: Yeah, that was the beginning of the Willie Brown era. And Leo did go off and run for lieutenant governor and Howard ran—let’s see, that was in 1980, so there was a census in 1980, so in ’82 he ran for United States Congress, got elected, and was one of my best friends. But he was forced out when he had to run against another Democrat (the California constitution was amended to have the two top vote getters appear in the November election regardless of party), and he ended up with a fellow named Brad Sherman, who was also a congressman. The Sherman-Berman battle was one of the classic in-house battles of the Democratic Party of all time. Howard lost in that election, surprisingly. Sherman is still the congressman and Howard is a lobbyist. But the career for him, the career for me, the career for so many people—Willie—it all started in 1980, really a pivotal year for politics in California.

Reti: Yes, absolutely.

Farr’s Staff at the California State Legislature

So tell me a little about your staff at that time.

Farr: Remember, I had worked in the assembly, so I had lots of friends that wanted to come and work for me. I remember hiring Wally Campbell as my Sacramento chief of staff. She had been sort of the Gal Friday for Jess Unruh and

knew everybody in Sacramento. I mean, I knew a lot of people, but she knew all the political people. And Wally set up my office and everything.

Marion England, who had worked for Leon Panetta, ran my campaign. I might have even made her the district director. I'd have to go back and look it up.

Reti: That's okay. This is all in your archives at the California State Library.³³

Farr: But eventually Fred Keeley became my chief of staff. Fred Keeley was the chief of staff for a guy named Joe Cucchiara, who was the Santa Cruz County supervisor from the San Lorenzo Valley. And Joe was very outspoken and everything. But once in a while you'd hear this very clean-cut, articulate guy, Fred Keeley, speaking for his boss. And you thought, wow, why isn't he the supervisor?

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So he came to work for me and he worked for me for several years. And we became like brothers over that time. And then he left me to go back and run for county supervisor in Santa Cruz County, and from there to the state assembly. And then term-limited out and came back to Santa Cruz as the county treasurer. We have been really close friends ever since the days he worked for me.

After he left me to go work as a county supervisor, I hired Donna Blitzer. She'd been an intern in my office. Also, out of that came Patty Brissenden. Patty was a single mom in Santa Cruz and worked for me as a staffer, and then she got married to a fellow who was working for Leon Panetta in his district office, John Brissenden. They decided they wanted to create a new life for themselves by

buying a resort in Alpine County, the least populated county in California. They put out a bid to get joint partners. And almost everybody around them in Santa Cruz—I think my wife and I had an IRA for 10,000 dollars and we said, “We’re not going to make anything. We can’t go wrong investing in real estate in California. And these are the most trusted people in the world. They’re wonderful, wonderful people.” So a lot of us found 10,000 dollars and became limited partners in Sorensen’s Resort in Alpine County after they bought it.

Reti: Oh, my gosh! I love Sorensen’s. I didn’t know that.^{xvi}

Farr: And that all came out of Panetta-Farr politics.

Reti: I knew there were connections between Sorensen’s and Santa Cruz, but I didn’t know what they were.

Farr: And John and Patty still own it. It’s for sale now.

Reti: It’s a great place. I’ve stayed there several times.

Farr: So those things all launched in those early eighties. I mean, it was not only a dramatic Speakership battle when I first got elected, but right after that, in ‘82, we had that horrible nationally declared disaster from the rainstorms in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which buried Love Creek.^{xvii} Essentially, the mountain just came down on top of them. So dealing with a presidentially declared disaster, and then the oceans really hit the Capitola area and all the houses on the coast. It was a pretty violent storm year.

And now we're sitting here today thinking about a fire that the federal government has now declared a disaster, not a presidential disaster, but a high enough disaster to trigger a lot of federal aid. I've been through one disaster after another. That (1982) was my first time to seek disaster status declaration to trigger state and federal aid. And then we had freezes and droughts and earthquakes and fires. And more fires and more fires and more fires. Floods. We've had it all. I think more than any other congressional district, I've had more nationally declared disasters. So I tell people I'm FEMA-ready. I'm a first responder.

Reti: (chuckles) Yeah, this area. I mean, the 1989 earthquake.^{xviii}

Farr: I've seen the whole agency evolve tremendously. During the Loma Prieta Earthquake, they had to set up these little tiny kiosks. People came out from the IRS. They came out from all these different agencies in the federal government. It was just awkward. You had to go down at set times. If you didn't have all your papers you had to go back. Papers are lost in fires and floods.

What it really taught me is that you're much better off having private insurance. And the best example is right after the Loma Prieta Earthquake, the next big disaster to hit Northern California was the Oakland fire. Now, everybody has fire insurance because you can't get a mortgage without fire insurance. It's mandatory to buy it. When those people lost their homes, and they were pretty nice homes, the next day on all-news radio station KCBS all you had was ad after ad of different insurance companies saying, "Our insurance adjustor is in the field at your house right now. Go there and you could collect a check. They'll

write it right there for you, for the loss of your property.” Whereas during the Loma Prieta Earthquake, people had to file, stand in line, file, come back—and just do all this paperwork.

Herb Arons, who I met when I was a county supervisor, he was a wonderful guy, who is now retired from banking. He came up with the wonderful idea after the Loma Prieta Earthquake to get money into the hands of the victims faster: why don't we do bridge loans? Why don't we get California banks to loan people who have filed for disaster relief in California in our area a loan that would carry them through up until they got the federal money? Then the federal government could pay back the bank. That was the first time disaster bridge loans had been created.

Now I've watched it evolve and I even sit on the committee in Congress that is in charge of funding FEMA, and really got involved in it. Because FEMA was created after 9/11 to bring all these siloed federal agencies under one roof. It's the biggest bureaucracy in the federal government now. But what FEMA does in a disaster, which is really smart, is that you call in and give your name and address, and your contact, Social Security number. And they, in turn, give you a number. That automatically opens an electronic file for you. And you can add to that file by email: oh, I wonder about my insurance; do I have to pay taxes on it? Any questions you have, whether you qualify for aid and all that stuff. So it's all done electronically and it's much better off. Faster, less paperwork.

We still need people to talk to people and so this local fire has lots of people out here from different federal agencies and state agencies to sit down and try to

help them get a license, you know, if they've lost their driver's license in the fire, their ID, Social Security card, and all that kind of thing.

What is interesting is how in politics so much of what an elected representative becomes specialized in is the circumstances of your district. And one of the things about our district is that it is not only one of the most diverse in just geography—so you've got ocean issues, oil spills—we've got damage from the oil, storms: you get valleys here that have floods and landslides. And then it just opens you up to all these different kinds of issues. Gang violence in Watsonville and Salinas that is almost incomprehensible. And universities. All this stuff. I feel like I am the luckiest member of Congress because my menu of activities is probably fuller and broader than any other congressional district. I mean, when you think about the city of New York, your congressional district is maybe ten square blocks or something. You represent 600,000 people, whatever it takes, lots of high-rises.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And most of your casework is being done by the city officials. You've got very competent government in the city of New York. So the congressmembers are left more freelance. You'll see a lot of the urban legislators—even in Sacramento the urban legislators are the ones that can sort of push the envelope. They don't have to be as safe in their politics because they're in a safe district in an urban area. Their local city council, school boards are dealing with the issues. The rural people, on the other hand, have to deal with everything.

Developing Standards for Wine Grape Growing

Reti: So was that when you started getting involved with agriculture, during this period?

Farr: Yeah, I don't think I got too involved until—well, actually it was casework. It was my father. (chuckles) My father was a wonderful man. He loved casework and he loved stories. He would just collect people. They would become part of his community of friends. Every time we'd have a party, all these friends of Fred Farr would show up. I remember he ended up with a friend named Soren Axelson. Soren was a Dane who came to California. I think his wife, Ingrid, had won a beauty contest in Denmark, a gorgeous wife. He was a sailor and moved here from the Bay Area to get involved in grape growing.

Anyway, Soren invested in wine grape growing in the Salinas Valley and he came to me one day and he said, "You're a lawmaker. We've got a situation that's totally unfair in agriculture." He said, "I grow grapes. They're a perishable product. I harvest them and I take them to the vintner and the vintner says, 'Guess what, Soren? There's a lot of grapes this year. And we're not going to pay you what we thought we were going to pay you because these grapes you delivered to us, they got color problems. They have what they call MOG (Materials other than Grapes—stems, leaves, things like that). They've got mildew. They got all these things every grape has. So either we're not going to buy them at all, or we're going to buy them for practically nothing.'" He said, "Those standards—they just negotiate them right there on the spot. There's no standards. Nothing is said in laws—what is a measurable amount of MOG—

mildew and color and all those other things. There ought to be a law. At least standardize them. Don't allow buyers to screw us."

I said, "Well, that's a good idea." So I introduced a bill to set standards and it becomes really a controversial bill. First of all, I'm not an ag guy, you know. It goes to the Ag Committee and the ag chairman wants me to not have the hearing on my bill because it's too controversial. He said, "We don't like controversy in the committee." This was the grape grower farmer against the wine maker vintner.

It was a fun hearing because I just argued the merits on it. And then what happened was that some of the vintners had threatened their grape growers and the workers in the fields that if they showed up at the hearing they were going to get fired. That's all the committee needed to hear, that people were threatened not to appear. So my bill, even though all the wine guys said, "It will never get out of committee; you won't even get a vote for it, nobody will vote for it," it got out unanimously. It was a stunning victory, the first time the wine institution had been beaten.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: That was my first ag bill. And you know what? I really loved it because it was essentially just settling a conflict. And what happened was that it put the vintners on notice that you've got to be a lot fairer to your growers. Now it's vertically integrated, but in those days you were just out there.

So, as the bill passed, what happened was they didn't want to get into setting it all in statutory law, so they sat down and the two sides worked out a whole schedule for protocols on standards for values of grapes, and they're still in practice today. And I just got a nice big trophy thanking me, from the Wine Grape Growers Association. I haven't done anything in Congress for these people. That was way back in the early eighties. The special recognition was for the wine grape growers, their first big legislation. And we won. But that started me working with growers.

Passing the Groundbreaking Organic Certification Law

And then, because I represented Santa Cruz, the organic people came in. The organic growers in those days were just a bunch of hippie farmers, long-haired guys trying to grow stuff without pesticides and herbicides on some little hillside farm in the Santa Cruz Mountains. It really hadn't gelled. But what they really wanted—standards, again. There was no law protecting organic growers. We had a scare on apples. They had a pesticide called Alar and I guess it made you sick. I forget the circumstances, but Alar ended up being front-page news: "Don't buy apples." The organic people said, "We don't use that stuff." And so, what was happening is that everybody who did use it is just stamping 'Organic,' even though they were using it.^{xxiv}

Reti: There was no regulation.

Farr: There was no regulation. You could just say whatever you wanted. I mean, labeling is a huge, huge issue. I could talk to you all day on just the politics of labeling. So Santa Cruz County organic grower, Mark Lipson, comes to me just

as a friend, and I'm a gardener anyway, so we're just talking about all this stuff and he's teaching me all about the fact that they have no protection under the law. I said, "Well, we can do a bill. I just did it for the wine grape growers and we worked out a compromise." And that's a story in itself. Essentially, I think we met the first time with about a dozen growers all looking like Mark Lipson. They were all hippie growers. So we wrote up this legislation essentially codifying what the standards were about organic, what it meant to be organic. Essentially, your soils have to be pesticide-free for at least three years, a minimum of three years.

I think Deukmejian was governor and he didn't want to give any more money to the Department of Agriculture to do organic management. So we ended up with a compromise saying, why don't they do a self-assessment, using these third party assessment teams, that would go out and assess whether you had really met organic standards. And that's where you get the certified organic standards. The centers for certification are all over the country. The first one was in Santa Cruz, and it's probably one of the biggest today in the country, CCOF [California Certified Organic Farmers].

Traditional agriculture didn't pay any attention to the bill. It was just small, little organic. And then what happened was that, as the bill got more and more attention, and had actually national attention through this organic movement and organic growers, and California was really doing something about it, Alan Cranston called me. He was a United States senator, a friend of my family's. And he said, "I hear you have a bill in the Assembly to do something about organic. I'm really interested in doing the same thing at the federal level. I've talked to

Senator [Patrick] Leahy from Vermont. He's got people in his state. So we'd kind of like to use your bill as the model, what you're doing."

So they introduced it at the federal level and I'm doing it at the state level. And the only time when we ever got into a huge fight at the state level was when I thought we might lose the bill. It was in the Senate Ag committee and traditional agriculture came in force. They realized that there was a growing market in organic, but they weren't ready to jump in. But they didn't want any conditions if they wanted to go organic. And this idea that: "I can't just take my fields and next year plant and call it organic. I don't want these three years that I can't do anything with my fields." You can grow there. You just can't call it organic. And you can't put any pesticides on it.

So they were really against this requirement that soils have to be pesticide free. So they tried to amend that provision out of the bill. They made the motion in committee. And that's when I just pulled this drama stunt. Every once in a while your collective wisdom of being in politics is knowing when to pull off kind of a bluff, you know. It's like poker. It's a bluff. And boy, if you win, you win big. If you lose, you lose big. So—

Reti: (laughs) So you don't want to do it too often.

Farr: It's high risk. But I pulled one of these. They made the motion but they hadn't voted on it. And I said, "Can I comment on this motion? I know we all worked hard on this bill and we know everybody knows we need organic standards, but if this motion passes, I'm dropping the bill." And you could just hear the room go, (dramatic intake of breath). And the senator said, "Well, we

don't want to lose this bill. Maybe we ought to repeal the motion, avoid the vote, and we'll work these things out."

Reti: Which senator was saying that?

Farr: Republican Senator Newt Russell, Vice Chairman of the Committee.

Reti: So he actually supported the bill generally. He just didn't—

Farr: Yeah, because by then you had some large families from the San Joaquin Valley who were very prominent in agriculture, who were growing raisins and grapes and they saw a great market for the organics. They were coming in, so it was no longer just a little hippie movement. I mean, they started it, and they carried the bulk of it, and they did the politics to get it over the hill. It wasn't until it reached the state senate that everybody showed up. And then this national attention that Alan Cranston brought to the whole cause.

It was wonderful. I'm really proud of that whole legislation. But most of all, I think—and you've done a good job of writing down the history^{xxx}—it's a great lesson for how to petition your government to make a law. They have little pamphlets on this stuff. And what I told the growers is, I said, "Look, it's going to take several years to educate Sacramento as to the merits. The merits are on your side. This is obviously something we've got to do. If you're going to be organic, you've got to be organic. You can't just be something else. But change doesn't happen easily here. But here's what we do. The game of making a bill become law is you go through what I call gates, which are committees. There's people sitting there. And you have to get the majority vote at that gate. So don't

worry that there's 120 legislators up here. Just worry that there's three or four at that gate. There will be a few that we'll know ahead of time that won't vote for you. And there will be a few that we know will vote for you. So it's those in the middle, and those are three or four now, I want you to—whenever I tell you who these three or four are on each committee—I want you to have somebody, your growers, go to them in their district office and introduce themselves, say, 'We live here and we're organic growers.' Just tell your story. You don't have to know all the politics in Sacramento. Just tell your story."

And so, they did a phenomenal job. They, the hippie farmers, followed up. This is where most people fail. I say, "Contact your legislator," and they say, "Oh, it doesn't make any difference." But they did it. And we timed it so we didn't tell them too far ahead of time. It was just when the bill was going to be heard. And they committed, "Tell me when that bill is going to be heard. I'm the organic farmer who's signed up to support it. I live in Fresno County. I'll go talk to the Fresno assemblymember." And so, we were able to get the bill support on the bill one by one. It worked so well that we got the bill done in one year, which is amazing, not four, which is what I thought would be the time frame.

Reti: In one year. That's phenomenal. I didn't realize it was that fast. There was an earlier bill too, right?

Farr: Yes, there was an earlier bill codifying organic but not setting out the protocols for protecting the label.

Reti: Okay. Well, great. Thank you.

Animal Humane Issues

Farr: Well, it was fun. Most of my legislative bills came from somebody in particular. I got very involved in SPCA, animal humane issues.

Reti: Yes, I was going to ask you about that. So tell me about that.

Farr: Well, I've always had pets. And then living in the Peace Corps and seeing how that kick the dog theory, it really does happen when you're living in poverty. When you're down at the bottom of the poverty pile, the only thing you have to maltreat is animals. They're pretty horribly maltreated.

And I always felt that as you get into business law, business regulation, contracts and things like that, when you're in business, you're setting a professional standard. Because you're going to make a profit. And so, you have to make a profit by abiding by the rules and being fair. I've always felt that if you're going to raise animals for a profit, then you have to live by a higher standard than somebody who just has a pet in their house. Obviously, we also need to educate pet owners how to be better to their pets. But if you're in the business of raising cattle, or raising chickens, or horses, or whatever, then those standards have to be much higher, and codified. So I've always felt that we ought to adopt the best business practices, the best humane practices. And they're changing all the time.

One of the bills came out from a discussion in the Safeway market in Carmel. Another friend of our family's came up to me, and she was very involved in saving horses that were being sent for slaughter. And she said, "You know, we ought to be able to have a rescue. If you don't want a horse to go to slaughter,

and you'd just like to have a purchase of Old Gray Mare and put her out to pasture, you should be able to do that." So that got me involved. They were taking these horses on trucks all the way to Texas to slaughter them. And the trucks were cattle trucks. And as you think about it, a cow doesn't have a neck. Its head is just right there at its shoulders. It's all the same. They don't have to raise their heads. So these horses would have to ride all the way to Texas with their heads way down, and some of them would fall, and if you fall in a vehicle when you're going around curves and stuff like that, you can shift the weight and you can have accidents. And they have had accidents.

So we had the Highway Patrol verify the accidents caused by hauling horses for slaughter. Because people who haul them as pets haul them in horse trailers. But the trailers built for the cows— See, cows come out here from the Midwest during the winter. They graze them in California and then they go back when all the grass is growing in the Midwest. You don't make any money if you are just hauling stuff one way. You go to drop something off; you got to load up the truck and take it back, so you make money if it's full all the time. So they were taking horses to slaughter after they dropped off the cows here. It took us a while, but we banned that use of that trailer.

Then we ended up creating, for all the research institutions, all the universities, mostly, we created building standards for cages. They had to be humane-sized cages. It applied to things like lizards, (laughs) and snakes, and everything. Nobody paid any attention to it and all of a sudden, we had a building standard— You know, they've since done this—it became a big issue with raising chickens. Ours only applied to research facilities. It became an issue here

a couple of years ago. It made commercial chicken producers have more humane-sized cages and treatment.

Puppy mills was another one— I don't know if you remember, you might have been very young, but shopping centers used to have Petlands. They were just a franchise all over. Every shopping center had one.

Reti: No, I don't remember, sorry.

Farr: One of those big windows and everything, and they'd put these little cute puppies in the windows. People would always walk through and they'd love to see Petland and all the animals in the store. And the big moneymaker for the store were these puppies. Well, they were getting these puppies from mills in the Midwest, who were just keeping these dogs in heat and breeding them in essentially chicken cages, no regulations in those states. And then they'd bring them out here and they were just breeding them every time they were in heat, never resting them. So they were puppy mills, essentially, having puppies, puppies, puppies.

And what happened is that the puppies weren't well. They didn't have vaccinations. The parents were in-breeding. I mean, the dogs were always cute, but the dogs were born disabled. And people would buy dogs on an impulsive— "Oh, we came to the store to buy something but look at this cute little one." And they'd have their kids with them: "Oh, Daddy, Daddy! Buy us this little puppy." And they'd take it home and name it and love it and care for it. And oh, it was the best thing that ever happened. Then all of a sudden it started running around in circles. It was just mentally and physically ill. It had disease and had to be put

down. And here was no recourse. So how do you stop this puppy mill in other states?

That was an interesting one because KCRA, the Sacramento radio station, actually went to Missouri, and the film footage they got is still used today to show how bad these puppy mills were. Film crews got in because the land owners thought they could be on TV, so they gave them free access. They were capturing all this cruelty on tape. Now, after negative publicity, they'd run you off the land. They're not going to allow you to come film them anymore.

So it was the Midwest—Kansas, and Mississippi, and all those states. How do you pass a law in California that affects those states? Because essentially, we found that we didn't—because of our county inspectors and our ag inspectors, we kept pretty good tabs and didn't find any puppy mills coming out of California. So we designed a bill to give the buyers—like when you buy anything else, you get a warranty, right?

Reti: Yes.

Farr: You buy a refrigerator; you get a warranty. Well, you buy a puppy, you should get a warranty. So the warranty would have to disclose the names of the parents of the puppy, give the medical history of the animal—did it have shots? Is there anything wrong with it? It's supposed to be in good health. It was a long list of things that the seller would have to fill out. And the recourse for the buyer was, as you could do with a refrigerator or stove, you could bring it back if it's not working. So you could turn your puppy in. Now, what we knew is that emotionally, people weren't going to do that.

Reti: Yeah. I was just thinking that. It's not a refrigerator. (laughs)

Farr: But if you're a pet store owner, you're thinking, "I'm going to have to take these rejected animals. I'm not going to be able to re-sell them. And I'm going to have to do all this disclosure. And these puppy mills I'm buying from aren't going to give me all this information because they're not keeping records."

So we ran that legislation. I'm very proud of it. I remember losing it the first session and I was really upset. I mean, Richard Polanco—I'll never forgive him because he voted for the bill when it went over to the senate, but he was my 41st vote, because the pet store owners really ganged up and were lobbying against it. And they flipped him and he voted against it when it came back because it had been amended in the senate. And we lost it. I was just about ready to strangle him. But we got it the next year.

In the battle, the national news kind of picked this up because of the footage that KCRA had. I remember being on *The Today Show* with Bryant Gumbel. I had to go down to where the Johnny Carson Show was, Burbank television studios. And I'm down there at 4:00 o'clock in the morning because *The Today Show* is on at 7:00 am in New York. You go live at 4:00 am on the West Coast. So the Humane Society organized and they had a woman bring her dog that could be with me in part of the scene. And she washed it and groomed it and everything.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And we were there at like 3:00 in the morning at the studio. (laughs) I'd spent the night in a hotel. I think the station had paid for it, or something. They

set it all up on the set and they say this is going to be a thirty second to one-minute interview. And the dog was right here. It was a large dog, so it was sitting on the floor right next to me. And I was petting it. And just before we were going on the air, they just came up and they grabbed the dog.

Reti: (sharp intake of breath)

Farr: And they take it off the set. You know, I'm sort of surprised, but I have to go on the air right now. I can't even say anything. So Bryant Gumbel comes on from New York and interviews me about the bill and I tell him why it's essential. And fine. It's over. You know. Cut it.

And I say, "Well, why did you grab the dog?" And they say, "Well, Bryant Gumbel saw your dog. He had one in his studio in New York. Your dog was more attractive than his dog and he didn't want you upstaging his dog."

Reti: (laughter) Oh, my God! It wasn't even your dog.

Farr: (laughs) So the poor gal had brought her dog and spent all night making sure my dog just looked perfect on television, and never got a chance to—

Anyway, our bill passed despite that. And it wasn't long before mall pet stores just dried up. The new law really had a dramatic effect. It really had a dramatic effect. It was just using consumer protection, which is still a strong tool in our business toolbox. Again, standards.

And then again, in Congress, I authored federal legislation because of interstate commerce—and where people were getting around state law was buying dogs

over the Internet, not buying them at these stores like Petland that didn't exist anymore. So we had to ban the same thing on the Internet. And I'm sure they'll find loopholes. But it's fun dealing with legislation that essentially allows animal husbandry to reflect the moral values of our society, which is humane treatment of animals. [Some people choose to be] vegans. That's fine. But if you are going to deal with animals to make a profit, then you've got to live to really high standards. Just like you have to do in banking, in insurance, in lawyering, and doctoring, and all the other professions.

Reti: And there was another bill about steel-jawed animal traps?

Farr: Oh, I tried to stop the use of steel-jawed traps. Yeah, I never was successful in that. I did it in Sacramento and failed to ban the steel-jawed traps. But I really tried again in Washington. It was one of the first things I did as a new member of Congress. I amended the bill on the House floor. I was sort of young, didn't even know what I was doing, didn't even know who the actors were. I remember Don Young from Alaska came to the floor when he heard that I had this amendment banning steel-jawed traps. He'd made his living as a commercial trapper. And where you make a living as a commercial trapper is usually getting animals that are a nuisance. I mean, we used to pay people forty dollars to kill a mountain lion and kill other things. But all the levies in California, the levee districts, maintenance—they hire trappers to get the muskrats and things that dig holes in the levees and can really cause levee failure. That's how Don Young made his living before he went up to Alaska during the oil rush. And then ended up doing very well up there. And then ran a barge and then ran for Congress. He's the longest serving Republican in the House.

So he comes to the floor, and I knew he was a senior member and very important, a ranking member on the Resources Committee. And George Miller, who'd been the chair of the committee told me, he said, "You ought to ask Don Young, (and I knew he was coming), he said, "Ask him about the time he had a steel-jawed trap in committee and he was trying to tell everybody that it can't hurt you at all, and he put his finger on the trap and it closed on him. It just snapped and closed on him. And he just sat there smiling." What nobody knew is that after the committee was over Don Young said to George, he said, "That thing damn near broke my finger. It hurt so much! But I'm still for steel-jawed traps."

So I came down and I'm on the floor. And he came and he said, "Can I yield?" I said, "Certainly, I'll yield to you." And he said, "These steel-jawed traps don't hurt animals. They're not a problem and they're not inhumane." We had all kinds of evidence that they were. I mean, prize dogs had been caught in them, and all kinds of stuff.

So (laughs) the thing was is that when you say something about a member, individually, that's derogatory, they can ask you to take down their words, which stops the proceedings right there. The clerk has to go back and read the record of what you said. Then you are expected, as the sayer of the words, to take them back, to apologize. You take back the words. And then they are stricken from the record. This is to keep people from saying nasty things on the floor on public record.

So anyway, what Don Young does is he yields, and he says, "This doesn't hurt anybody." And I said, "Well, what about the time in committee when—I wasn't here—but you had a steel-jawed trap, and I understand you put your finger in it and almost broke it." And he said, "My finger is just fine!" And he flips me the bird. He flips me the bird while saying, "This finger is just fine." (laughs) And if I had been there long enough I would have been the first one in Congress to ever ask the Speaker to take down a gesture: "Mr. Speaker, I demand that we take down that gesture." It was inappropriate. He would have had to stop all Congress. He would have had to come back. It would have been a great debate. The Republicans would have rushed to the floor to defend him; Democrats would have rushed to the floor to defend me. (laughs) And we would have had a debate on whether that ought to be stricken from the record. We never did because I didn't think of using that parliamentary tool.

Anyway, my amendment passes. And then it got over in the Senate. And it just was murdered in the Senate. And you know what's interesting? I never knew this but there are a lot of people that trap, people that live in rural areas, a lot of the religious groups—the Mennonites and others—because they make figurine dolls and stuff. The fur that's used all comes off these varmints that they trap, not big exotic animals, just little muskrats and probably rats and all kinds of stuff. Anyway, they all write in and say, "I'm making a living off this. I need these steel-jawed traps." So we lost in the Senate.

But what I did for Don Young—and we've always been antagonists but we laugh a lot. It's a way politicians get along when you're really—you know, if they have a personality, even though you're on opposite sides of the issue you can at least

joke with one another. So I've always joked—in fact, he's authoring a bill now on ocean acidification with me because the Republicans are in charge, and he's a senior member, and he cares about ocean acidification. So we've teamed up. But (laughs) we started off as enemies. So what I did for him just to break the anger that he had for me, I got from C-SPAN that picture of him giving me the bird and blew it up poster size and gave it to him. (chuckles) You know, bills—all kinds of stuff—just little things happen. And there's a story for each one of them. Wonderful, wonderful stories.

Origin Labeling Law

Reti: Tell me about the origin labeling law. I know that one was killed by the Grocers Association.

Farr: Yeah, that was in the assembly, although it passed in Congress. And since, it's been amended.

Yeah, what happened with the Alar scare and other things like that when we were trying to work on organic, is we realized that we had a lot of imports. And we can't pass laws in Sacramento to affect how other countries work. We're just a state. We don't really pass import laws. We pass state standards. And as long as they're not in violation of a federal standards, then states can have higher [standards]. So what we wanted to do was to affect imports by having grocery stores label where products came from. And labeling, as I said, every kind of label—particularly your prescription drugs, all that kind of stuff, all this GMO labeling we're talking about now—it's huge and it's very controversial. And to the credit of the FDA, the Food and Drug Administration, they have kept up

really high standards for labeling. There has to be a need to know by the consumer. We don't just put a bunch of information on there. In fact, the vitamin pill makers got into a huge fight with the FDA because the FDA said they can't put on their bottles claims that it would do stuff for you, that it would cure diseases, or help treat cancer if you took this vitamin or that vitamin. And that was a huge battle because the vitamin world wanted to be able to brag about the benefits of vitamins.

So origin labeling at the state level was: okay, let's just have supermarkets mark whether these apples are from Washington, or Mexico, or wherever they got them from.

Reti: Oh, I see. So before that, they didn't have to say.

Farr: No. They still don't have to say. Well, they do now under federal law, but nobody was even venturing there anywhere else [back then]. [California] was the first state to go this bold and require origin labeling. I thought it was a great idea. It particularly would protect all the California growers.

And you know, agriculture is our number one industry in California. It still is the biggest. We're the biggest ag state. We grow more crops and we grow about forty or fifty crops that no other state grows. All the pistachios, all of the almonds—all come from California. And many other crops. All of them.

And so the idea was, let's protect California industry. And what was happening at that time was that Safeway was importing pistachios from Iran. They didn't call them Iranian pistachios, because we had an issue with Iran, right?

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: (laughs) They called them “Mediterranean Pride.” Versus “California Pride.” And the consumer would walk down the aisle and the Mediterranean Pride was cheaper than the California Pride. They thought it was a different brand, like the difference between a Macintosh apple and a Fuji apple. They’re both apples, but they’re different brands. Well, this wasn’t different brands. It was all labeling, false labeling. And there was an import requirement that says that imports have to say where they’re packaging, what country it comes from. But the requirement of federal law say that it can be in little, tiny words. You can even stamp it on there. Some of them just stamp with ink. And then a lot of this frozen stuff you put in the freezer, a little bit of water gets on it, and the ink gets smudged, and you never can find out where it comes from. So there was a lot of need for upgrading and professionalizing, and standardizing origin labels.

Well, the grocery industry went nuts. They said this would cost millions and millions of dollars. I said (laughs) “Where do you get millions of dollars?” “Well, you got to buy all these pens and paint. You got to buy all the signing material and we have to have an employee who does nothing but go through and paint all these signs.” My argument counter to that is every single box has where it’s shipped from, where it comes from. And I use that braggingly when I go to Costco in Washington, D.C. with my staff. I say, “Go over to the produce area and tell me where all that produce is from.”

Reti: Watsonville. (laughs)

Farr: It's all from the Salinas Valley and Watsonville. You know, all of it! It's amazing. (laughs) They say, "You grow all that stuff?" I say, "Yeah, we really are the agriculture capital of the world."

So to grocers I said, "Just take the label off the box. It's in your store. It's probably right underneath the shelf that your produce is on."

You know, in the fifties and sixties when I grew up, the labels that were very important were for French wines. French wines were the elite wines, the French wines. Or Belgian endives. For some reason, they had to be from Belgium. You know. We grow endives. The same endives. But Belgian endives were like—

Reti: (laughs) Exotic.

Farr: And there were other kinds of things—people would throw in a label whenever they wanted it to be more value-added.

So there wasn't a problem with the industry putting in labels because they did it all the time. They just got to control when they wanted to do it, and how they wanted to do it, and we wanted to standardize it. So they beat us in Sacramento, but they didn't beat us at the federal level because finally we got all these—you know, Mad Cow disease in England, and all kinds of things are required. And some problems that came out of Canada. And we had raspberries from Guatemala that children got sick on. So after a lot of these foreign import outbreaks, we were able to finally get origin labeling.

Well, now they have backtracked on it, particularly for cattle. We buy young cows from Mexico and essentially what they have to do (and it is a problem) is

every time this cow changes hands, or moves anywhere, you've got to put a label on it, and you have to keep a record of it. So the eventual seller of the cow for commercial purposes would have to report a whole background. The meat industry just said this is too cumbersome.

And we're now fighting GMO. And I have really mixed—my background is in biological sciences, and knowing how the FDA is so protective of their labels, it's sort of like: well, what's the medical risk of a genetically modified organism? We've been genetically modifying—well, before we did it genetically we just hybridized. You got two plants that were strong and you mated them and then got—like all the trees they grow in commercial tree farms are based on one super tree. It grows fast, perfect, no knots, disease resistant, water resistant. It does everything. And the same thing with Driscoll's, with their strawberries, and things like that. So we've been doing hybridization in agriculture forever and ever and nobody's complained about that. What GMO's allow is for you to do it faster because you don't have to wait for the plants to mature, and get the seeds from them, and then match all that. Just by gene splicing, you can do the genetic modification. I don't know that there's any related health risks to it.

Nevertheless, my friends in the organic world—well, they're mixed because the organic industry is also a little bit concerned about all these labels that are now coming on. It was pretty clear that you were organic and that meant something. Now you have these quasi-organic—no GMO's, no this, no BST. So the labeling is getting diluted. And people feel that requiring people to label GMO is going to somehow protect the non-GMO industry. I don't know whether it will. And I think it's really confusing. So I sort of have a foot in both doors. I'm trying to

support good labeling, but it can also get carried away, where you're labeling when you don't need to.

Oil Spill Liability Law

Reti: All right. Let's return to the question of oil. I know that part of your legacy in the state assembly was the Oil Spill Liability Law.

Farr: Yeah, that was really fun. We had the Exxon Valdez [Spill] and the problem was, who's responsible for cleaning it up? So what I wanted to do is make it a strict liability, that is, if you caused the problem—and you don't have to argue about whether you caused it. Because oil, like fingerprints, can be run through a spectrometer analysis, and you can tell where the oil came from. So you can label oil and probably label the oil field it came from. So the technology was out there and by matching up oil with shipper you could tell which shipper is carrying that oil. Sometimes you have a whole bunch of oil out there in the ocean from a spill and there's nobody to be found. There's no ship in the area to trace it to. But you can do the trace back of shipping lanes and times and match oil with ship.

So if the trace back shows you caused the problem, you pay for it. That's what happens with the Clean Water Act and Superfund Act. You have strict liability. If you caused the pollution, you've got to pay for clean up. Under Superfund law. they'll trace it back, for contamination, way back in the history. Who is the responsible party? We've even had problems where they've sold the company. Well, the buying company then has to assume the liability, even though they didn't even know anything about it.

So the liability there was, let's just protect ourselves for oil spill cleanup by having strict liability. Everybody liked the idea except the oil companies.
(laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And the interesting thing about authoring the law is that the attorney general's office—Van de Camp was attorney general—and he sent over a young lawyer working for him to testify in support of my bill. And I asked her, I said, "Well, you're a great witness. I want you to testify at every committee for me." I started talking to her about how we could make the bill stronger. Her name was Eileen Zanger. Her family owns the Casa de Fruta in Hollister. So she's from the district. So then I started talking to Eileen. She said, "You know, I'm in law, but I'm not really interested in law. I'd like to do something else." I said, "You ought to do the Peace Corps. I was a Peace Corps volunteer." "But," I said, "You're nuts if you leave the attorney general's office. You've got a great paying job and everything. People would die to get your job." She said, "No, I want to do something different." She goes off and joins the Peace Corps and goes to Panama." I'd been to Latin America. We wrote a couple of times and kept up being good friends.

And then I'm running for Congress and now my district includes San Benito County. And her parents end up being (laughs) big supporters. Her brother was a big Republican but had followed all my organic, and everything like that. He was very interested in ag. So again, it's just one of those things where these

issues introduce you to people and their backgrounds and lots more comes out of it than just making a law.

So we got the oil spill bill adopted because essentially the government was not going to pay for clean up. If the oil company or the shipper who caused the problem isn't going to pay for it, then the taxpayers have to pay for it and we had no account for set up, or funds to respond to an offshore oil spill.

And another thing that came out of that is we ended up changing—we couldn't do it by state law—but we suggested that the International Maritime Commission change the shipping paths for oil tankers coming up the California coast. They come down from Alaska, and they go either into Oakland through the Golden Gate, or they go down to LA Long Beach. And then, when the refineries are in LA Long Beach, sometimes they bring the oil up to the Bay Area. It's just a lot of tanker traffic. What we learned after the Exxon Valdez was that if there was going to be an oil spill on the entire California coastline, the area that would be most valuable habitat threatened by a spill, because of the value of wildlife, would be the Central Coast. This is ground zero sea otter habitat, which is a federally listed endangered species. And if you wipe out the habitat of all that kelp and everything, sea otters and the sea urchins, if you wiped that out and all the marine mammal life, it would cost the shippers a lot of money.

So we went to the insurance companies of the oil shippers and said, "I've got an idea of making oil boats go further out, essentially, and stay offshore further out." Well, it costs more time, and time is money, and it costs more gas because you are taking a long route. But the insurance companies argued: "It will give us

a buffer for response time by being farther out and maybe we could prevent that oil from getting to shore, with cleanup and everything.”

So I started that in the Assembly and ended up finishing it in the United States Congress. It took almost ten years. And what was really helpful was there was a young Coast Guard officer here in Monterey who really took the maritime shipping issues head-on. He was diligent in taking the proposal to the International Maritime Commission to get them to agree with California’s proposal. It has to be agreed to at the local level, and then the national level, and then the international level. But all along, the shipping companies and the insurance companies were supportive of it. The oil companies didn’t want it because it costs them more money, but anyway. We did adopt that, changing the entire routes for oil shipping on the California coastline.

Reti: That’s a great accomplishment.

Farr: After Exxon/Valdez, California set up all kinds of new laws [to require] first responders equipped and trained for oil spills. Housed in the State Department of Fish and Game, it’s called OSPR [Office of Spill Prevention and Response]. Then we created sanctuaries to make sure you can’t drill.

Reti: We’ll get to that [later]. That’s a really important one.

Farr: (laughs)

Divestment from South Africa

Reti: There are a couple of other issues from that early period. What about your involvement in divestment from South Africa in 1985, 1986, divesting state funds from companies doing business with Apartheid-era South Africa.

Farr: I didn't lead that effort. I was one of the co-sponsors of it. I think Maxine Waters led it. A lot of people were talking about how you could pressure the South African government to end apartheid. I don't think people thought about state action. But California is very conscious that our PERS (the Public Employment Retirement System) is one of the largest retirement investment systems in the world, big because we have integrated all the local governments, all the cities, counties, school districts, special districts, and the state government—it is one big, massive retirement system, essentially a portfolio of billions and billions of dollars.

The PERS board wasn't doing anything about it, so we, as the state legislature, were going to mandate that the PERS board had to divest themselves of businesses doing business in South Africa. CALPERS is big time because we're not just little peanuts. We're a big, big owner of corporate shares. I've always felt that public policy can influence Wall Street through our pension fund investments. No one ever follows what the overseers of these funds do. They're flown all over the world because they got so much money to invest. So these companies and countries give them VIP treatment. And they're not elected officials, so they don't have to report all this stuff. But it's amazing what goes on in trying to get your gazillions of dollars invested in this and that.

So obviously, when California suggested this, that their retirement system pull out of American companies doing business in South Africa, it was a big time Wall Street discussion. And we had a very heated debate on the floor. I was carrying a [different] bill that was up in the Ways and Means Committee just before the divestment bill was to be heard. A little background on my also controversial bill: California tax law was requiring every company doing business in California from all over the world to have to carve out what their California shares were of their total earnings globally, and pay taxes on it. Only a couple of states did it. It's very complicated and it wasn't enforced that well. But can you imagine going to SONY and saying, "Okay, of all your global businesses" (or going to Toyota), "How many of your cars were sold just in California? How much money did you make on them? And we're going to tax you on your global income."

So I carried the bill to eliminate that tax because I was head of the Economic Development Committee. Because it was very difficult to assess. It was very controversial and I don't think it was working very well. It certainly wasn't going to allow companies to invest in California.

Reti: That's the question, yes.

Farr: Global companies argued that California law was too difficult to follow and unfair since: "We have to pay taxes here that we don't have to pay anywhere else." So that bill was up in the Ways and Means Committee the night of the apartheid bill. I knew it was going to be heard, and it was going to be very controversial, and was going to last all night. I knew I didn't have the votes [on

my bill]. So the bill was scheduled and I just got up and said, “You know, this is a very serious bill I’m carrying. But I’ll drop the bill if this committee will adopt the apartheid bill. As much as this bill means a lot to me and California, it means a lot more to me and my family values, social values, that we stop apartheid any way we can.”

So it was quite an emotional night. You find once in your lifetime you’re in the spotlight. And I remember thinking, of all the nights that the cameras were all on, and the audience, and whole theater was filled, it was that night. It was on me before the committee, before they took the next vote. (choked up) I was shaking and everything. Those are great moments because you realize that your voice makes a difference.

So anyway, the divestiture bill passed and when it got to the floor Maxine Waters probably gave one of her greatest speeches she’s ever given.^{xvi} A fiery speech opposed by Bill Baker, an East Bay Republican assembly member. The next year they both went on to get elected to Congress.

Reti: That’s really moving.

Farr: Yeah, it was heated. He was a very conservative Republican. He ended up being in Congress and being very successful in Congress, until he got beaten by Ellen Tauscher because he was just too conservative for the East Bay district.

Reti: Where was Willie Brown with the apartheid bill?

Farr: Willie was totally in favor of helping Maxine. He was going to have that bill passed. There was no doubt about it. You know, the big debate was: does local

government— I mean, this is a federal issue. South African politics is what we do in the diplomatic world, not in state provincial government. So why should we even be bothering with this? I mean, when are we going to stop? Are we going to start using this PERS trust funds for everything we don't like going on in the world? Divestiture sounds easy but it's very complicated and what risk is it going to put— I mean, there were a lot of arguments as to why California shouldn't go down this road.

But we were feeling so powerful, as this state does. California is a nation-state. There's no doubt about it. We have enough income to be one of the bigger nations in the world. Our economy ranks sixth or seventh in the world. So we would be economically strong as if we were an independent country. So California acts like and projects itself as a nation state. We don't wait around for Uncle Sam to tell us what to do, or what we can or cannot do. And we don't wait around for other states to show us how to do it. We just do it. We've done that repeatedly.

I mean, the biggest debate under Schwarzenegger was the Clean Air Act that the legislature passed, AB 37, or whatever it was called, which required the automotive standards to be the highest in the world. I was in Congress at the time. And every automobile company and oil company sued the state after we set those standards. Because what we realized is that they're not going to manufacture two kinds of cars—one kind of car we're going to sell in California and another kind of car we're going to sell in the rest of the country. And then how do you import cars from one state to another? So when California sets the standards they become the national standards because our market is so big. And

that's where our clout is. As goes California, so goes the nation. We are the laboratory of political change, both left and right.

I think the PERS thing is just this perspective. If that's one of the biggest investment funds in the world and it's calling for withdrawal, the markets are going to react to that.

Reti: Sure. Certainly, there was this whole movement going on at the University of California around divestment during that period, which was similar. It was all part of that pressure.

Farr: Well, I learned a lot from that. I learned a lot about how we, at the local level can use market forces through our spending choices and investment choices to influence change. The leader of using investment leverage was Jess Unruh. When he was the state treasurer, he was very political, a former Assembly Speaker, a very controversial Speaker, very progressive. A guy who really thought about professionalizing state government, he amended the state constitution to change the legislature from a part-time job to full time. The State Constitution required part-time state legislators, limited to five hundred dollars a month salary, no staff, no professional staff. He said, "If you want to have a professional legislature, then you've got to upgrade it, invest in it." And he really carried the ball to do that.

And with that, I think, comes the knowledge of how powerful we are and how to use the tools. When he became treasurer, he did an amazing thing, because now he's investing billions of dollars of the California economy into national banks and Wall Street. I mean, our budget is over a hundred billion dollars. And we

have income higher than that. And that income has to be tucked away. Well, you have choices. You could put it all in one place or negotiate benefits for the state with the investment.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: That would be crazy. But he went to all these banks and all these investment entities saying, “Yeah, we’ll put our money into you, on the condition that you give us some break. Either give us a lower interest rate, or for first-time homebuyers, lower their rates. You know, there’s got to be a social benefit. You’re going to win from us but we want something back.” Nobody had ever asked for anything back.

Fred Keeley, when he was treasurer of Santa Cruz, did the same thing. He was investing all the funds that Santa Cruz—about seven hundred million dollars a day—and he went to the banks and credit unions and said, “I’ll put money in your bank, but we want to start a program here in Santa Cruz for first-time homebuyers. We want to get them money at a low interest rate, lower than market rate, or as low as you can get, lower than the conventional loan. We want to show you that you have some skin in the game.”

And that’s the way Jess Unruh taught. Not everybody has picked it up but it’s a very effective tool to get things done. You don’t have to pass laws to do it. It’s sort of using the executive privileges that the president has, but in this case that the treasurer has. It’s knowing our market share and how much we can influence people with our investments and our buying power.

I think the future for strong local government around here is consolidation of all the governments and their buying power because they all have to buy cars, and trucks, and fire engines. You know, you start thinking, what if we all pulled together and did it as a big group? What kind of break can we get? Saving taxpayers money. The savings could be dedicated to solving problems that don't have resources to pay for it. Use best management practices to generate more income, rather than begging to raise bond money or taxes, which are both politically difficult.

I mean, what galls me is—I get parking tickets a lot. (chuckles)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And you know, it's funny, because we're all in the same county. And yet if you get a parking ticket in Carmel, you send your parking ticket check to San Jose, and in Monterey you send it to San Diego (something like that). All these different towns have a different collection agency for parking tickets. If we all got together in the Monterey Bay area and fourteen cities said, "Why don't we all go to one entity and argue that we'll put all our parking fine business with you, but you've got to open an outlet here, or a store, and employ people in our region, and we want a better return on our funds," I think it could be done easily. So that's another example of how you could mold government management by just using your purchasing power.

Breathalyzer Ignition Lock Bill

Reti: Yes. Speaking of cars, can we go back to the breathalyzer ignition interlock—

Farr: Oh, yeah. That was a wonderful fellow from the Carmel Valley. An older gentleman came in to see me and he said, “You know, I invented something in my garage. I’ve been an inventor. I’ve done other inventions.” And he had a local doctor here who was investing in him. He was saying, “I’d like to have the courts have this option. When people have been convicted of drunk driving and had their driving privileges revoked, we find that because of a need to drive, they just ignore their order. They’ve lost their license but they’re still driving. And because they have an addiction, they’re still driving drunk. So you can’t [prevent] this by just the court saying, ‘We’re taking your license away. Do not drive.’ People are doing it and they’re drinking and getting into accidents. However, if we have this “breathalyzer,” which is sort of like a microphone that’s attached to this cord that’s plugged into your car, before you can start the ignition you blow into it. And if you have alcohol on your breath, your ignition won’t go.”

And that’s what he created. He built it and actually tested it out. But he needed permission to market it in California. And what we did is we got some local judges here in Monterey County to come up and testify and say, “This is the tool that I need in my toolbox because the laws on sentencing DUI, drunk drivers, can’t stop somebody who has got an addiction problem and wants to drive. They’ll just drive illegally and get into another accident. We need this tool.”

So we got the bill passed. It was a lot of work because people didn't understand—false positives—well, what if you just took mouthwash? And yeah, you probably wouldn't pass. But how many people get in a car and take a big swallow of mouthwash before they start their car?

Reti: (laughing)

Farr: The ACLU and everybody else was a little bit concerned. Anyway, we got the bill passed. And then to implement it, it has to go through the Bureau of Automotive Safety, which takes forever. They have to really make sure this device—because you're putting it on a car. And they want to know is this going to hurt the car, its performance? Because everything in a motor vehicle is tested and legalized and standardized.

Reti: Right. Ignitions are very sensitive.

Farr: Yeah, you don't play around with that—it could cause unintended consequences, accidents— So it took a year or so, or two years, to get it through the Bureau of Automotive Standards. They said, "Yeah, it works."

I'm sure he sold his device to a company. About then, I went off to Congress. But I think about him every time I hear about these Breathalyzers, which are now standard procedures. And some companies buy them for their fleet. "I don't want anybody driving my car and getting my company in liability." So they'll install them in their trucks if they think there's incidences of drinking and driving. But that technology all started right here, with a guy from Carmel Valley, who has since passed away. I remember reading his obit and thinking

how much he changed this world, and he probably never got any recognition for it.

Reti: He saved a lot of lives.

Farr: Yeah.

Reti: Well, I have just one more question on the issues part of your time in the state legislature. How are you doing?

Farr: Fine, I have plenty of time.

California Assault Weapons Bill of 1990

Reti: Okay. So this one, of course, has a lot of current resonances, but let's talk about the Assault Weapons Bill of 1990.

Farr: Well, as I recall it was the Stockton schoolyard shooting, where these kids got killed. Pat Johnson represented Stockton and was very emotional about how easy it was to get an assault weapon. And one of my best friends, Dick Iglehart, who I'd met in law school—he and his wife had become very close friends, and he was in my wedding, and he ended up being a lawyer for the Alameda District Attorney's office—and that office, of all of the district attorney's offices in the state, it had the tradition at that time, going back years, where a lawyer from that office would be the head of the DA's lobby, their lobbyists in Sacramento. And Dick, my friend, was chosen to do that because he interned also in Sacramento. He knew and loved the legislature. Earl Warren had that job when he was a DA. A lot of interesting people came out of there. Ed Meese, who worked for Ronald

Reagan, he had that job. It's been an interesting DA's office. And Eric Swalwell, came out of it and now Jimmy Panetta. So the Alameda DA's office got a real political legacy.

But Dick Iglehart was adamant on the part of all D.A.'s about getting this Assault Weapons bill passed and he was very good at it. So he came to me and asked me for some suggestions and ideas. He knew the legislative process really well but he just wanted some insider's feelings about it, people that he could talk to. It was quite a controversial vote. I remember Assemblyman Rusty Areias, who was my roommate—I kept bugging Rusty—you've got to pass this bill and he just said, "I know it needs to be passed but I represent Los Banos and my district is NRA nuts." I said, "Why don't you ask Dick to come down? Dick can really talk to crowds. He's a big burly guy, you know. They'll love the fact that he's law enforcement and he'll tell you all the reasons, what this bill does and doesn't do."

So Rusty, to his credit, had Dick come down and face a big crowd of angry gun owners. I mean, the thing was it's very hard to defend an assault weapon if you're a gun owner because you got a gun mostly to go hunting. So (laughs) no hunter would suggest that you ought to hunt with an assault weapon. It's against the law anyway. But—to give up your privileges: "I may want to have one someday." Well, for what?

So California—we did pass the bill. (laughs) A lot of things happened. When I first got elected to Congress, in my class—I was in a special election. I got sworn in in June, but my class had gotten sworn in in January because they'd been elected in 1992, the year that Clinton got elected president. And one of the new

class members was a freshman from the state of Washington named Jay Inslee. And Jay—he loved fishing and kayaking and birding. We had a lot of common background. We liked each other. We're good friends. So he was struggling over the 1994 crime bill that had the federal ban on assault weapons. And I told him this story. He asked me, he said, "You passed it in Sacramento. Was it a tough vote?" I said, "It was a really tough vote. People agonized about it." And I told him about Rusty's experience, who ended up voting for it. And I said, "You know what? The people who agonized the most and voted for it, all got re-elected. It's a lot of scare and not a lot of bite when it comes to re-election." Jay Inslee accepted my account, voted for the crime bill and lost his election.

He then (laughs) was depressed, went back to trying to practice law. He said, "I had no—my heart wasn't there. I decided I'd move to a different place in Washington and run for Congress again." And he got re-elected to Congress from a different district. He left Congress to run for governor. He is now governor of the state of Washington. But he lost his first big re-election on the gun issue, assault weapons.

So it has consequences in different areas, at different times. A lot of it is timing. I'm just lucky that in the district I represent what seemed to be controversial in other parts of the country just seemed to be common sense politics here. I think that's because we are a very enlightened area. We have a lot of universities here, and you have a lot of people retired here who have educational backgrounds because the cost of living here is so high, you have to have some kind of income.

In many ways, the leading sense of the environmental movement has come out of the Central Coast, forever and ever. Really progressive ideas about agriculture. A progressive, modern approach. Best business practices—people don't disagree with them, that we ought to have these standards. It's a wonderful place. I mean, things are always controversial. Change is difficult. If change was easy, everybody could do a diet without any problems and always lose weight and never fall off of it.

Reti: (chuckles) Yes, that's true.

Farr: But change is difficult. That is what people don't understand. Why is it, when it seems so common sense, why can't we get it done?

A Time of Transition in California Politics

Reti: Well, that brings me to a philosophical question. This period of time that you were in the assembly seems to me to be a real time of transition between the period that your father was in the California Senate—the time of Governor Pat Brown, characterized by optimism and expansion. And then you come in in the wake of Prop 13 and you leave shortly after term limits in the legislature are imposed in 1990. And then you have the rise of the initiative process, which becomes more and more dominant in California politics during that period. What was that like, that period of time?

Farr: Well, I remember my dad coming back to Sacramento. When I was working there, these old timers, retired state senators, would come together as alumni. They were all older and most of us in the assembly were a lot younger, so we

really didn't mix and sort of socialize. They would run off with all their old lobbyist buddies, you know. But they used to sit around and talk. They'd invite me to dinner and I'd stop in for a moment. I didn't want to feel out of place, so I'd leave. But they'd always say, "Well, why can't you guys do what we all did?" Different legislatures serve at a moment in history. But the Pat Brown era did some amazing things!

But there weren't many limitations on legislators or candidates at that time, either. You didn't have campaign finance reform. You didn't have disclosures. You know, a lot of things were backroom deals. Pat Brown had his heart in the right place and did all these wonderful things. California was a big, great state. A lot of the most exciting things in the United States were coming out of California. And we no longer had to take a backseat to anybody. We were emerging as our own powerhouse, developing that sense of self-esteem, self-power. And Pat Brown was sort of testing the waters.

Sputnik had gone up and so the federal government, Kennedy, was saying, "We're going to put a man on the moon." Well, when he said that he ended up turning to California to say, "And you get us there." I mean, it wasn't California per se, but it just happened to be Cal Tech. It happened to be institutions that were in California—Lockheed, and so on. And Pat Brown said, "If they have all these scientists who can get us to the moon and back, why can't we use that talent just to fix our problems? Our water system can't deliver water and our highways are too narrow to get us there. We've got to build freeways. And if we're really relying on bright people, then we've got to expand our educational system and we ought to build more universities."

And so he just got on this Renaissance idea that we're going to solve all these huge problems. And we can do it! We've got the money and the politics was there. People weren't questioning the spending of money. They were all like: "The vision is great. We can go to the moon. Why can't we bring water from Northern California to Southern California?" Pat Brown always used to joke—in private he would say, [mimics raspy voice] "You know, I was California's greatest environmental governor because I had to decide whether to bring the people from Southern California north, or bring the water from Northern California and keep 'em all down there." (laughs) And he said, "So for you—" (and he was a Northern Californian) "So for us Northern Californians, that was a great environmental decision. We kept them down there. And we saved all our land up here for us."

Reti: (laughter)

Farr: (laughs) He also was funny because when he got elected governor, and the story is—my father told me this story—he called in his campaign manager and he said, "Okay, let's go over this election again. Now, tell me, 'What counties did we lose in California?'" His aide said, "Well, Governor, you lost Santa Cruz County. You lost Riverside County. You lost Orange County. You lost San Diego County." The governor said, "We've got to do something about that. What do you think we ought to do? Those people need to be educated. Let's build University of California campuses in those counties." (laughter)

Reti: Oh, my god. (laughter)

Farr: UC Santa Cruz, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC San Diego. (laughs)

Reti: Interesting, hmm. But I think he voted first as a regent against Santa Cruz being located in Santa Cruz. Later, he changed his mind. He had to be convinced, if I remember right. He voted for the campus to be located in Almaden.^{xviii}

Farr: Yeah, well even before Almaden—I told this story the other day because I remember my father telling it to me, I don't know how serious it was—but they were going to choose Tehama Ranch [for what became UC Santa Cruz], the Work family ranch. And yet the blue bloods on the [Monterey] Peninsula didn't want all these college students here upsetting their quality of life here. Nobody questioning authority. The sixties were a controversial time, the fifties and sixties. So it went to Almaden, and then Almaden had a bad heat spell day when the regents came and visited the site. They melted. Then the Regents came to Santa Cruz, and Santa Cruz had a good weather day, sea breezes on the Cowell meadows and clear views of the whole Monterey Bay. The Regents decided on Santa Cruz and opened the campus in '65.

I was in the Peace Corps when the campus opened. People said, "Why didn't you go to Santa Cruz because your dad was very involved in trying to get it located—if he wasn't going to get Monterey he certainly wanted Santa Cruz. He was close to Dean McHenry. He loved all that Santa Cruz academic stuff. He ended up being on the foundation board for the campus. I said, "Well, it wasn't even built when I went off to college. So I couldn't apply."

So, getting back to the changes that I saw in the assembly, when I got in as a staffer to the assembly, Jess Unruh realized that the constitution of California had not been updated. And it had all kinds of things, like a part-time legislature.

You'd have one year as a regular session, where you'd introduce bills. And the next year you'd do just budget. In either segment, you were only part time. Nobody would come work for you because there were no full-time jobs in the legislature. So when my father got elected, he was looking for somebody and they said, "You're not going to hire a professional secretary in this town because nobody is going to work for the legislature." He ended up hiring a gal in Sacramento who was head of the League of Women Voters and had clerical skills, Curtis. She ended up with a career in the state senate. She ended up running the Senate Rules Committee when my father retired.

It was obvious that our State Constitution needed to be updated, revised for modern governance purposes. And our court system was awkward, between all these justice courts, and municipal courts, and superior courts, and appellate courts, and so on. Anyway—all the institutions of government—civil service, the legislative branch, and the courts. So let's revise the language. They first needed to get a constitutional amendment passed to allow the legislature to create a Constitutional Revision Commission. The Commission's job was not to rewrite the constitution. It's just to clean it up and make it practical for governing this great state of California. Jess Unruh was very involved in that. Burns was president of the senate. And then Governor Pat Brown. And then even Ronald Reagan, who was running against Pat Brown in 1966. All supported Proposition 1A on the November ballot, to create the Constitutional Revision Commission, and to create it with a constitutional amendment.

And then that Revision Commission was formed. By the time I got to Sacramento, they'd almost finished all their work. And I ended up on the

committee that's supposed to take all their recommendations, the Constitutional Revision Committee in the assembly. And there was one in the senate. It was pretty passive, but I was very aggressive about taking all those recommendations and making sure bills got introduced. And spent my career as a staffer there cleaning up the state constitution. And all those measures ended up on the ballot and the voters approved every one of them.

I look back on the stuff that we did and it would be so controversial today, we wouldn't even get it out of the legislature.

Reti: Why?

Farr: Well, for example Bill Lockyer wanted us to create a—this didn't come out of the Constitutional Revision Commission—but we were putting things on the ballot to implement the suggestions made by the Revision Commission. And Article One was sort of California's bill of rights and we had a bill to revise it. We incorporated the federal constitution by reference into our state constitution. Which meant that when the California Supreme Court made a decision, anybody reviewing it at the federal Supreme Court level would have to say, "These judges reviewed how this incident reflected in the United States Constitution as well, and came to the conclusion therefore—" So it would be very hard to overturn a California Supreme Court decision. So that was just little stuff tucked in there that could never go to the voters today.

Well, Bill Lockyer said, "Why don't we put in that bill you're drafting Californians 'right to privacy' in this state?" Everybody didn't like government snooping around. We put that in the bill. It passed without even a debate. "Yeah,

we want to get government off our back. We don't want them snooping on you." Well, you know what that has been interpreted by the courts as? That women in California have a right to privacy. So their reproductive decisions are a private decision, which you have a right to make in California. That would never pass now. Today it would be headlines. It would be the first thing they've think of. You don't want women to have that constitutional protection for a right to an abortion. It hasn't been that interpreted that way because it hasn't come up, but it certainly could. At least the women's groups feel very strongly about it.

So what was interesting, when I left the assembly [as a staff member], Howard Berman carried the last Constitutional Revision Commission on the 1978 ballot. And it passed. It was a lot of technical stuff. And when I looked at it I said, "We've almost totally rewritten the California constitution." The idea was, let's have a clean, modern constitution, where every sentence means something in a broad sense. Then you pass statutory law to implement it. I felt really good about having done this revision work.

That same election, in June 1978, Howard Jarvis put on the ballot Prop 13, which was the beginning of what I call the Initiative Industrial Complex in California, because the people who ran that campaign made so much money, that all your political consultants said, "Why should we go out and try to get people elected to public office, with all their human frailties? We can just take these initiatives, which are emotional, and yes or no—and raise tons of money." And they do; they make hundreds of thousands of dollars on initiative campaigns. Proposition 13 was the beginning of the initiative mill process.

And the tragedy is the election that cleaned up the constitution also broke that [work]. And for the next decade, we added everything into that constitution. It's a mess now, a total mess, because there's all this statutory law and all that work that the commission did, we haven't been able to get the legislature to— I think they've tried to do another Revision Commission but it just never amounted to anything.

So you're talking about changes in era. It was really sad. I think the whole state for about twenty years was real keen on modernizing itself and professionalizing itself and having a really good, strong document to stand on, but then just sort of got lazy about it and nobody paid attention. It's slipped a lot in its ability to govern itself effectively.

Nonetheless, because of our economy and the diversity of the state, we're still second to none in the number of industries we have here and the ability for people to get a start in a new world. I mean, there's no greater place than California. The problem is that because there are so many people and there is so little land to be developed, the cost of real estate has just escalated.

When I first got on the board [of supervisors], there was a controversy in doing environmental protection and doing EIR's and everything like that. I would argue that because of the environmental movement in California, a new business was started and grew. We catalogued all our land and resources, more than anything else, learned the real value, resulting in the costs of land going up. So essentially, the environmental movement was very good for the real estate business. It wasn't good for people who were trying to get access to affordable

living. But these realtors, who were all pretty conservative in those years, and bankers and everything—they just thrived off the real estate markets in California. They never give any thanks to the environmental community for making it really hard to develop. We stopped rampant sprawl, but with fewer houses, the value of existing housing went up.

But the bottom line is, it has also preserved this incredible look that we call the quality of life in California, that people really enjoy. So the Big Surs are still—when they're not on fire—(laughs) there is pristine real estate. You can still drive through the Salinas Valley and see vegetables. You can't see that in the Santa Clara Valley, which is the one area that proved to be sort of the Paul Revere of what's coming to the future of California. If we can't stop urban sprawl and protect these cherished vistas, all of our valleys will look like the Santa Clara Valley—sprawl. On Monterey Bay, our economic engine is we sell scenery for a living, and we've got this great weather. [We need to] sustain our scenic beauty, and do some smart planning (that's still the huge debate). But the record is there that, without a doubt, it was the environmental community, the adoption of the Coastal Act and things like that that really slowed down the development in the state, and it made everybody stop, look, and listen before they decided to develop. And it's made it a lot harder and a lot fewer things are getting built. The consequence is that the demand to live here has gone up and up and up, so that the prices of everything are just astronomical.

So those are the kinds of shifts I've seen.

Impressions of California Governors

Reti: So we talked about Deukmejian a little bit. The governors that you served under would have been: first, Jerry Brown; then George Deukmejian, and lastly Pete Wilson. Do you want to comment on them as governors?

Farr: Yeah, Jerry appointed me and I was in awe of Jerry. I loved all his moonbeam stuff. But when you think about it, he was really trying to get a sense of the modern state of California by going out to local elected officials who were young and progressive and asking our opinions on this. The idea that we could start producing energy by solar power and wind power—nobody had thought about that stuff before. Could we really do it? A lot of his early initiatives everybody thought were wacko—because there was no oil crisis. He didn't have to do this stuff. He had a lot of minds saying it could be done and wanting to build a legitimate industry, an investment.

The wind machines, the wind generators came from Denmark and Sweden. They had a lot of wind. And what they did, was they just replaced the old windmills with these new, modern wind energy producers. But they were doing them one here, and one there, and one there, just like the old farms. And Jerry Brown had the idea, "Look, if you come to California, we want you to move your business here and make these things in California. And again, we have a big enough market. So if you want our permits to get these things built, then you've got to invest in our state. But we're not going to just put one here and one there, willy-nilly. We're going to put orchards. We're going to farm. We're going to farm wind." That was a radical idea. So we have these wind farms.

Reti: Like up at Altamont Pass, places like that.

Farr: Yes. We went out and tested where all the winds are. California was way ahead of the other states. The federal energy department has now done that for all kinds of stuff, you know: what rivers would make good dams. They've done it for every aspect—hydropower, gas power—they know where the wind—I remember hearing a report from them that the epicenter for solar development in the United States is rural parts of Arizona. They have the most days of sun, year round. But if you build there, you don't have the grid lines hooking up this thing. You're out building in the middle of nowhere. How do you send your electrons out of there? You have to build a whole grid system.

But Jerry was just so: "What if?" That was great. It was very exciting. He had a lot of young, bright people working for him. It was a lot of fun being in Sacramento, a lot of social parties. Essentially, the legislature worked until five o'clock and then went home. Now they work into the night, have night meetings. And everybody is commuting back to their district. In those days, you lived there. Everybody had a house in Sacramento. So you'd have the evenings to socialize. And across party lines. Even a lot of Democrats and Republicans, our kids would get together and have picnics and barbeques. Even as a staff member, once a year I'd throw an annual, all-night party, an end-of-session bash at my house. It would go all night. We lived on the edge of a park and we put speakers out in the park. I mean, the neighborhood would go nuts then. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs) That's great.

Farr: (laughs) I met so many people and all the Republicans would show up too. Everybody got along very well.

I think Deukmejian was much more of a conservative. He'd come out of the legislature, so he was a lawmaker and realized how important it was to use the tools of law. But his idea was that we're going to cut, squeeze, and trim. "I'm going to limit the size of government." Jerry was for limiting the size of government, but it was more big government. He was not against inventing new, small, micro governments. I think Deukmejian was just the opposite: "These crazy new ideas. Don't need any taxpayer money." He supported the old systems that had gotten him elected.

But he took some risks. I remember I carried the bill to have California bid on the federal proposal to build a Supercollider, a big high energy physics project. I carried the bill in the assembly and John Garamendi carried it in the senate. The state had to put up a financial pledge for billions and billions of dollars. You couldn't appropriate the money, so you just had to write the pledge, an insurance policy to back a federal investment. And we got the governor to work with the finance director, and Governor Deukmejian came in and said, "Well, why don't we put up the entire California prison system? It's worth a gazillion dollars. And as far as security, everybody knows that's the last thing you're going to close in the government. If all else fails, you're going to keep the prisoners, the bad people locked up." So it was very smart, very clever. And we threw that in as part of our application.

We were going to bid on this with the federal government against other states. They were having a team of federal people go around the country. Illinois and Texas were bidding, and other places, because it was a big, federal energy department investment. But you needed state support. And you needed to have an area that was physically okay, with no earthquake faults or anything. We ended up with an area around Woodland and an area around Stockton, which was the best place to build this big, huge, gigantic underground facility. We put a lot of effort into designing the application. We had to get the bill signed by the deadline. We woke up Deukmejian in the middle of the night and he signed the bill. I thought he would say that he doesn't get up to do a bill just to go and bid on something.

Reti: Why did you have to wake him up in the middle of the night?

Farr: Because the legislature didn't pass it until the last minute of the last day of the last time. And the bid had to be in the next day.

And you know what? We lost on that bid and we lost in the preliminaries. We never even got on the short list. I mean, the national politics was it was already fixed for Texas because the Speaker of the House was from Texas and the senators—all the powerhouses were from Texas. But we didn't know that out in California.

But we lost, even on the first round of cuts because the federal advisory committee was made up of scientists from different universities. We had half a dozen scientists from the University of California system. This was the University of California, our state's greatest academic legacy. The Supercollider

was the physics departments' cause. And these Cal scientists decided they didn't like the idea that Davis or Stockton—these were just nonacademic areas—their intellectual pride [led them to think that] academics would not want to live in these rural areas. This was going to be an international space station, right? Superphysics. They dinged it on the real estate we had prioritized as being feasible for the project. When Senator John Garamendi and I heard that, we were so angry. We had a postmortem hearing, a joint hearing, senate and assembly. We asked these faculty members, "Now, who do you people work for? The state of California? Who pays your salary?"

Reti: (laughs) Right.

Farr: "And you go off and ding the number one project that the governor and the University system and the legislature fought just down to the last detail to get submitted? Just because you don't like the geography? What an arrogant—" I think we sort of suggested that these guys ought to find employment somewhere else. But anyway—

Because of this and I was involved with a lot of stuff that UC Santa Cruz was doing, we ended up thinking—you know, we have all these emerging technologies in California. How are we supposed to know in the state legislature—I mean, we broke our ass on this physics project, but now you've got all these electronic projects that are coming out of Silicon Valley, and you've got these biotech projects coming out of Davis, and we got all this stuff going on in medicine, and we're trying to do the Human Genome Project. What science is the most important for California? We can't do it all and put in tons of the taxpayer's

money. So what we need to do is create a “science advisor” for the governor and for the legislature.

So Deukmejian, in his conservative way, said, “I understand why this state needs it. Other states have had it. They’re out here with their science advisor lobbying California companies to move to the Triangle in North Carolina, and move to Texas, to Austin, and all this. And we’re just sitting passively by, doing nothing.” He said, “You know, I got elected as a conservative governor and I said I wasn’t going to expand my office. And even though I think it’s very important that we have one, I’m not going to support it because I don’t want to have a science advisor in the governor’s office. I am not growing my office.”

We were pretty discouraged by that, thinking, we’ve got to do something. This is such a big, leading science state. So the chancellor at the University of California at Davis, who was close to the legislature, suggested, “You know what? Why don’t we create a committee, a consortium of all the research universities, the presidents of our state’s research universities? In place of a person, we will have a committee of the best and the brightest. We can absorb it in the University system, and we will meet and we will prioritize. Let’s call it the California Council on Science and Technology.”

We got that done. John Garamendi and I got it adopted. It is still alive today. It was done by assembly resolution. It’s been briefing the federal government. We are the only state that has all of these—Cal Tech, Stanford, Berkeley—all the schools, both private and public, sit on it. Their office is in Sacramento and it’s all paid for by the University [of California] system. So it’s kind of cool. And that

was Deukmejian. He finally agreed. He said, "Well, as long as it's not on my watch, I'll do it." I remember working with him on that.

I did a bunch of other bills. I did one with Ronald Reagan on voter registration. It said that you be able to register people who spoke languages other than English.

Reti: Bilingual ballots?

Farr: Yes.

Reti: But this was under Reagan?

Farr: Yeah.

Reti: And that was when you were a staff member at the State Legislature.

Farr: Yes.

Reti: And Reagan was in favor of this?

Farr: Well, I was a committee consultant and I worked for my boss on legislation. I'd worked on this bill. I wasn't carrying it, but I'd worked on it and he was very supportive of it. The legislature had gone home and somebody in the governor's office wanted to know more about it before signing or vetoing it. He was wondering if he should sign it or not and there was some debate going on. Mike Deaver was his chief of staff and he was a close personal friend. He lived in the neighborhood that I lived in and his wife and my wife were really good friends. So I think Mike just said, "Why don't you come and tell the governor what you think about it." At least as a courtesy to me, that was very nice.

Reti: So this would have been a bill that stipulated that ballots be printed in both English and Spanish?

Farr: Yeah, I think that's what it did. It did that and I think we also allowed for bilingual poll workers. I was all into bilingual stuff because I spoke Spanish, coming out of the Peace Corps. I was a little bit arrogant: like if I can learn another language, everybody can and should. (laughs)

I remember the feeling of the Democratic leadership about Ronald Reagan. It was that Ronald Reagan was an easy guy to get along with. He was an "aw shucks" guy. He'd call in his people and the legislative leadership and he'd have his advisors all meet to set priorities. Reagan wanted two or three conservative things done—you know, welfare reform, whatever it was. So Moretti, the Speaker of the Assembly, and others of the Senate, they'd all meet with him, the Big Five, Democrats, Republicans of both houses and Governor Reagan. Reagan would lay out what he wanted and they'd all patiently listen and say, "Well, Governor, those are going to be tough to get done. But we can work together. We will need some support for our programs if you want us to support yours. So we've got a list of stuff we want." (laughs) And what they'd always tell me is the governor would ask for two or three items and the Democrats would ask for twenty-three. And both got everything they wanted. Reagan wasn't as much of a hard liner as conservatives think. He was a compromiser. California did a lot of progressive things while he was governor.

So when people talk about all the things that Ronald Reagan did on the conservative side—he did an awful lot of things, like five times as much on the

progressive side. (laughs) He'd sign bills that increased taxes in the state and stuff like that. People like to rewrite history and think [Reagan] just did all these conservative things. But he did a lot of liberal things too.

Pete Wilson probably was the most friendly. He'd been an assemblyman, a mayor of San Diego, and a United States Senator. He came back and got elected governor in 1992. When he heard I was running in a special election in 1993, he told me one night—I was working with him on doing regional planning, a big bill to try to look at California by regions and get all the governments—the special districts, and school districts, all of them—into this regional thought. These boundary lines are artificial and we ought to not just be limited to our jurisdictional boundaries. We ought to have a vision by region, which we could do academically and economically, because different regions produce different things. It was a neat idea. And Becky Morgan, a state senator from Silicon Valley, the state senator, she was my co-sponsor. We worked closely with Governor Wilson because we wanted him to sign the bill. He'd been mayor of San Diego and he really understood the importance of regional thinking. San Diego was a member of a thing called SANDAG, just like AMBAG is here, a COG (Council of Regional Governments). SANDAG is probably the best council of governments in California. He was very supportive of its work and felt the rest of the state could benefit from “thinking regionally, acting locally.”

So one night, at some social event, I was talking to Governor Wilson, and he said, “Sam, I really regret that you're running for Congress. You ought to stay here. You'd be much more effective here than you will be in Congress.” I said, “Well, Governor. This is just something I got to do.” He said, “No, I've been there. Let

me just tell you. You can get more done here. You're doing more right now." I thought it was really nice for a Republican to say that to me: "Don't go. I need you to be here in the assembly."

I was close to some of his staff members. He had a good staff. People forget—Pete Wilson is probably going to be known more for Proposition 187, the anti-immigrant proposition—but when he was first elected and gave his first State of the Union speech in a joint session in the assembly chambers, he talked about the state debt being—I don't know what it was—I think fourteen billion, or something like that—and he said that he would be willing to do something. That was very controversial for a Republican. He said, "I'm willing to take the risk as a Republican governor to increase taxes to meet one half of the need of paying off this deficit, if you, as Democrats, will have the guts to cut the other half. We can work in a partnership."

And when he said, "Raise taxes," boy, the Republican members of the assembly—they'd just started the No New Taxes idea—and here's this governor coming in and suggesting he's going to raise taxes in the state. That really pissed them off. Right then, it was, "We don't like you. You're not our party." And he got censored by the state Republican convention. They were passing resolutions against him. That's when I think flipped his staff. And then his chief of staff, who was really well liked, died of a heart attack. It just shocked the hell out of everybody that he was gone at such a young age.

Pete Wilson did not like the right wing of his party. And yet, they devoured him. They got him to shift to the right and start saying things that he really didn't

believe. But I thought he was a very sweet guy. And being a former U.S. Senator and a governor—no other governor [of California] has claimed that in the last few decades—and a mayor and very progressively involved in government, I think he did a lot of good for California. It's too bad he made the right wing get him into this anti-immigrant issue because I don't think he came from there, representing San Diego. He was very close to—very familiar with border issues and border commerce and everything else. He could have worked with Democrats to get a lot of needs addressed, but his support of Proposition 187 poisoned him with Democrats. He was in his first year as governor when I left to go to Congress.

Reti: Is that a good place to stop for today, Sam?

Farr: Yeah.

Reti: Okay.

Ending Corporal Punishment in California Public Schools

Reti: Okay, so today is August 11, 2016 and Sam Farr and I are here again at Monterey County Supervisor Dave Potter's office in Monterey, and we are now starting our fourth interview.

Farr: Yeah, it's interesting. Here we are in the fourth day of our interviews and we're still in the middle of this fire, and we've been living with this smoke, and now the clouds have cleared but the smoke is occupying the building.

Reti: The room is filled with smoke.

Farr: We don't see it but we sure can smell it.

Reti: Yes.

So Sam, today let's start by talking about the work you did to end corporal punishment in public schools.

Farr: Yeah, you know, it's interesting, in reflecting on these stories—you realize that behind everything I did, the things I got involved in, big stuff, there's always a personality, there's always another person important in making it happen. People brought me ideas and exercised their ability and friendship. They felt, "I could go talk to a person who can make the laws, or spend the money. and maybe they'll listen and maybe something will come of it." So every lawmaking story has a personality behind the lawmaker.

Corporal punishment is an interesting one. A very prominent doctor on the Monterey Peninsula was Dr. Talcott Bates. He wore a bow tie, Eastern-educated, married to Peggy Bates. They lived on Jack's Peak. They were kind of the family that transitioned from being sort of a hippie family with a lot of friends around their home, to a very serious, intellectual family. Peggy was very involved in local education issues and ended up on the State Board of Education during my father's time in the State Senate. Talcott was very involved in politics, particularly in saving Jack's Peak, which is next to where they lived. He helped save land and make it a county park. When I was a county supervisor, I'd worked with them because they had made a private effort to try to keep the top of the mountain and ridge lines from being developed. The highest, most visible

spot is called Jack's Rock. The views of the Peninsula were on top of that peak and people wanted to build on every inch of it.

So they'd made an effort—I forget how they initiated it—but using a petition and getting everybody to sign it, and asking the board of supervisors to use their authority under the county parks department to acquire the land. I came in at sort of the last minute, after all those negotiations had gone through, but I was the county supervisor, so I worked with them on finalizing it and actually dedicating the park. My father and the Bates had been very close friends. We used to go on picnics together.

Talcott was very active in the pediatric world. And he said to me, "You know, there ought to be legislation that stops school people from beating kids. It's against the law just to take a kid and beat him, but where it's still permitted is in the California school system. You ought to prevent teachers from hitting and physically hurting students."

I said, "Well, that just makes common sense." So I introduced this bill and got it to the governor's desk. It was interesting—the only letter we got in opposition to it was a group of African American women from a PTA in LA, suggesting that they want that discipline for their kids in the schools. They liked their schools to have that authority.

Nonetheless, the bill was signed into law. I think Jerry Brown signed it into law. It's something I've been—you know, eliminating corporal punishment in all of the public schools—in other words, the idea is if you have to discipline kids, there's quiet time and time outs and those things. There are alternatives to just

taking a paddle or a fist and hitting them. It didn't get a lot of publicity, but it's something I've been really very proud of it, and I'm always thankful to Talcott for bringing that to my attention.

What we've learned about schools is that for education to be successful you have to have a safe place to learn. A kid can't be afraid to go to school. And that's why I'm very pleased to see now the new movement is anti-bullying. Teachers have told me is that the best thing you can do for public education in America is make the schools a center of love, not a center of fear—fear of testing, discipline, punishment for tardiness—all things that are penalizing. Penalties don't encourage you to try again. The penalty for doing something wrong is to never allow you to do it again. You know, you lose privileges.

It was interesting because I learned from a retired navy test pilot that I flew with when I was in the assembly, from Monterey airport to Sacramento municipal airport—he said to me one day, “You guys in civilian society do it all wrong. When I was in flight school and we were flying off aircraft carriers and doing all kinds of stuff that's really dangerous, very high risk, if you screw up, they don't ground you. They tell you to get back in that plane and do it right. Go back up and learn from your mistakes. In civilian society, when you screw up, what do they do? They say, ‘You're grounded.’ We do that with our kids: ‘You're grounded.’ We ought to be using encouragement. If you did it wrong, learn how to do it right, and stick to it.”

Anyway, so I'm encouraged that our schools in California are moving towards that concept that we ought to be a safe place for children to come, regardless of

what kind of neighborhood or family they're coming from. And I think the beginning of that awareness started with eliminating corporal punishment in schools and supporting programs to build self-esteem.

Reti: Thank you.

Congressman with a Camera: Farr as Photographer

I hear that you use your camera to connect with people. You do a lot of photography, portraits?

Farr: When I ran for the assembly, I had to organize a campaign and I had to get a campaign chairman. My father's friend was Ansel Adams. When Lady Bird Johnson came, Governor Brown threw a party for her at Hearst Castle to help my dad's 1966 re-election campaign. My dad arranged for Ansel Adams to drive me home that night, from Hearst Castle to Carmel. My father had been invited to spend the night, but not me. I had a nice chat with Ansel on the ride up the Big Sur highway. We were friends. So I asked him when I ran for the assembly if he would be honorary chairman of my campaign. He said, "How much work is it going to take?" (laughs) I said, "Well, you're honorary. You don't have to do anything." "Oh," he said, "Well, I'll be glad to do that. Why don't I give you some photographs and maybe you can sell them and raise some money for your campaign."

Reti: Oh, nice!

Farr: So I was hanging out at Ansel's house, which was also his laboratory and many visitors came to see him, and he was writing books on photography,

making prints—he was just a wonderful human being. I'd started doing photography when I was in the Peace Corps because there was no way of communicating in those days. Letter writing was the only way you could do it. We didn't have cassettes and we didn't have small cameras, or digital—certainly no cell phones—nothing like that. A call to the United States from Colombia was a big deal. It cost tons of money. It was sort of a ship-to-shore conversation. You had to go downtown, and you had to go to an international telephone center, and you had to make a reservation to use the phone at a certain time on a certain day. And then they would dial the number, and it would come through, and then you would talk and stop, and then the other person would talk and stop. I think in the time I was in the Peace Corps I only called home once. Anyway, I started to communicate with photographs, by just taking a lot of photographs and saying, "Here's what the land and the people look like." And that's when I got interested in taking pictures. But I never had taken any courses, or really thought about any cameras.

And after sitting with Ansel I said, "I'd really love to get to know how to take better photos." I didn't actually talk to him about it. It was sort of my own feeling. I was sort of embarrassed to say, "I don't know a damn thing about what you do, and I can't understand your jargon, but I really appreciate the outcome." I did ask him one time. I said, "How do you become a great photographer?" And he said, "Go to a lot of art museums." I said, "To be a *photographer*?" And he said, "Yes, because photography is all about the eye and perspective. What you want to put in the picture—how close or how far away, or whether you want the whole thing or just the eyeball, or whatever it is. You know, art galleries are just

full of people's perspectives, portrait galleries, and they're all different. What you do, seeing all those paintings, is you begin appreciating angles and light and subtleties. Studying art will make you a good photographer."

Reti: I love that.

Farr: So, I got elected. And then I started taking pictures of the assembly in the same way I had taken pictures of Peace Corps life, just sort of the back scenes and things. People would love my photographs. And I ended up doing a fundraiser every year, where I would photograph all kinds of different people working in the State Capitol, like lobbyists [who] would come to golf tournaments and play golf; or my colleagues in casual situations, or laughing, or doing something like that. Or even falling asleep at their desk. I always said, "I'll never use these pictures to hurt you."

I remember there was a legislator we didn't like because he was an arrogant kid. He was the heir to the Sebastiani fortune, a conservative Republican. And he did some silly things, like we passed a resolution to celebrate and honor and congratulate Sally Ride, the first woman in space, and he withheld, wouldn't vote for it. He voted against it and he made a speech that he wouldn't do that until all women were in space, essentially, get them off the planet. Anyway, well, he was sitting in the back of the chambers one day. He liked to smoke cigars. He was in the last seat, and even though you weren't allowed to smoke, nobody enforced it. He was blowing smoke rings and laying back in his chair, just looking so pompous and arrogant, and blowing smoke rings on the assembly floor. (laughs) And I took a phenomenal photograph of him doing that, without

him knowing it. And I thought, boy, I'd love to just give this to his opponent. And I thought, no, if I do that I'm going to lose the trust of everybody in this place. So I ended up giving him the photograph, which he liked. It was a great photograph. And, in essence, that was the beginning of me saying that I'll never use these photographs to hurt somebody, to use against them. Then I had people's trust: "Oh, Farr's got his camera. Take my picture."

On the Congressional floor you're not allowed to take pictures. Now with cell phones—and I did use mine when we just shut down the Congress in 2016. We occupied the House chambers with a sit-in. The Republican majority, in charge of Congress, shut down the House, so I said, okay, the rules don't apply.^{xviii} We are closed. So I went back to my office, got my camera, and came back. Everybody was taking pictures with their cell phone but I don't think anybody took them with a good camera. So I've got a lot of wonderful shots of that historical moment of sitting in. I just got them developed. So when we go back in September, I'm going to take back these pictures. I'm sure everybody will want copies of them.

So yeah, I have a reputation. They say to me, "You're our House photographer." I get invited on trips. I got invited—when I went to Cuba with the president I took probably a thousand pictures. I've been there eight times, the last with the historical first visit of a president of the United States.

So it's a hobby. I have taken a lot of photos. When I retire, I hope I'll have time to go through and edit all of the photographs and to pick out ones that are worth giving away, printing. Even though everybody gets everything in digital format

now, people still like the old-fashioned, printed picture that they can put in a frame. So it's still my hobby. I give away pictures to everybody. It's broken the ice for me. I've made some great friendships with people, especially on the other side of the aisle. Photography is just a tool in my toolbox. As Shary says, "Thank God you don't play golf because we couldn't afford both golf and photography."

Reti: (laughs) Yes. You know that I am a photographer too, so I understand what that means. That's fantastic, wow.

Farr: (chuckles) Yes, but you're really good. You publish, I don't. I wish I could be as good as you are. I don't know what to do with all these photographs because now the archives say, "We don't want anything in frames. We want everything digital. If you want to take pictures of your pictures, we'll enter that into your archives, but we don't want anything physical that you could touch." So, like this room, where we're surrounded by all of these certificates of appreciation and awards of recognition and photographs—I have that all over my office in Salinas, in every room. I just counted my office room and there are 144 things hanging on the wall. And that's just one room in an office. I have about five rooms there. And then my office in Washington, D.C, the same way, and my home and apartment. I can't get rid of all this stuff. It's really hard. I earned them and I appreciate them, and they mean something, but I don't have any place at home to hang them. You don't want to just throw them away. I don't know what you do with them, probably just put them in boxes. I don't want to have to rent a storage facility. You know, winding down life and trying to get rid of all the stuff you've collected is really hard.

Reti: It is hard.

Farr: It's nice that we can do this interview on a nice little digital recorder and you can store that so simply.

Reti: That's true.

California Oceans Resources Management Act (CORMA)

Well, okay. So then I have a couple of questions about your oceans work. So there is something called CORMA.

Farr: Yes. the California Oceans Resources Management Act I mentioned earlier when we talked about Governor Pete Wilson.

Reti: So talk to me about that.

Farr: Well, when I was in the assembly, Willie Brown appointed me to be an assemblymember to a national organization called the Council of State Governments. There are two national—well there's three state legislator's organizations, actually. There's one called ALEC [American Legislative Exchange Council], which is very right-wing, business-supported, and trying to get together on right-wing issues. That's a national association. Then there's one called the National Conference of State Legislatures, NCSL, which is probably the most popular and biggest. And then there's the oldest one, called the Council of State Governments (CSG). The Council of State Governments is a national organization, but they organize themselves around regions. So the Western Region is one district. And I went to one of those meetings and was kind of

skeptical. I didn't just want to go be with a bunch of old legislators who want to just sit around and drink and smoke and whatever—I thought it was kind of a social group. But I actually met a lot of young, smart people and it was just fun talking to other elected state legislators.

We were a regional organization, so we had the states of California, Oregon, and Washington, and Idaho, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. But we [also] had Micronesia and the American Samoas and Hawaii. And we started realizing the one thing we had in common was the Pacific Ocean and we had problems in each of our states. The federal government wasn't really communicating with state government and here we were fighting offshore oil drilling and things like that. So we decided, among the council members, because we didn't really need legislative approval, that if we wanted to organize regionally to do something, we could.

So we organized a committee, a subcommittee on the oceans what we called The Blue Revolution. And we had a staff member named Jim Rote, who was a very close friend of mine, who got hired in the Assembly Office of Research, and he helped staff and go to these meetings in different states with me. And out of that came this report on the conflicts of the sea that were caused because different federal agencies didn't coordinate or communicate with one another. We were even thinking that we could maybe take the whole region and create what they call a "regional compact," which is sort of what the Tennessee Valley Authority has. It allows the federal government to grant the region federal responsibilities—authorities that are in the federal government for you to administer locally. You take care of all the micro details. So instead of having the

federal government set all these laws and rules—one size fits all for all their jurisdictions around the United States—we could have the Pacific Ocean managed closer to home, more in the Pacific coastal states. Our CSG Oceans Committee could find out what our common needs are.

Anyway, it was a new, bold concept, and we petitioned the federal government. They weren't interested in listening. But we really had articulated some of the issues about conflicts in fishing, concepts in mineral management. The one that I remember most clearly was crab pot fishermen, like these winter crab fishing that we have right now—they put those pots out in special spots around the bay. Those are all local decisions about where to fish, when the seasons open, rules made by the state for nearshore fisheries. But at the same time, the Federal Mineral Management Agency, under the Department of the Interior, would authorize their ships to go out and do seismic surveys for geological, and particularly for oil purposes. Because federal government could put these lands up for sale for oil drilling, but before offering for lease sale, the feds did seismic surveys. So they would contact these ships with all this sonar stuff, then drag the ocean with big cables behind these ships. So all of a sudden they come through a crab pot field—

Reti: Oh, wow. Destruction.

Farr: And then all the crab fishermen who have put all their money into this—they're not cheap. Their lines are all gone. And the ships are complaining, "God, all our good, expensive equipment got all tangled up in those lines." So it's just like, one hand didn't know what the other was doing. And the Coast Guard was

removing buoys that the fishermen were relying on and stuff like that. Our report on the Blue Revolution pointed out all the conflicts between federal, state, and local governments that weren't being addressed.

I was on the Resources Committee in the California legislature, and I had been on the Coastal Commission as a county supervisor implementing the new Coastal Act. So I said, "Well, one thing the Coastal Commission has done—we know the value of real estate along the California coast, and land use is so controversial because of the Coastal Act. But we have no understanding of what the rest of California coast line means." I said, "The California coast line has got Beach Boys; we've got surfing movies; we've got redwoods that go to the sea; we've got Carmel beaches, Big Sur, harbors, etc. We've got all that stuff. So what does it all mean to this state as a culture, as an economy, as an asset?"

So I put in a bill, it was post-Exxon Valdez—to do a study of the California coastline, what we knew about it. What kind of studies have been done academically? What's the bibliography of ocean research? What's the interest in oil? Where is the oil going to be drilled for, and where not? It was just an assessment. How do you go out and do a census of what is the California coastline—essentially the land side plus the shoreline side, the west side, with an understanding that this ocean is meeting the land in California and it's a pounding that goes on for millions of years. It's the conflict of land and water, and out of it comes this beautiful coastline, which most people live on and take for granted.

The bill was called the California Ocean Resources Management Act (CORMA) and I'll never forget it for two reasons. One is that my friend and assembly staffer, Jim Rote, who worked on the bill and wrote it, named his cat "Corma." The other was it was the first economic inventory of the value of our coastline.

I had introduced my CORMA bill. It gets heard in committee. These bills are usually non-controversial, except you got to pay for the study. And I don't think we even appropriated any money. Anyway, it ended up easily getting passed.

Reti: But who is doing the survey?

Farr: The responsibility for the study ended up in the Department of Resources. Now, what happened is the Department of Resources had a secretary who was very friendly to me, but more importantly, Governor Wilson was the governor. So when he's putting together a budget, everybody is saying, "You've got to cut, squeeze, and trim everything. You're a conservative governor. You can't just keep spending. All these studies are important but we can't afford to do them. So just tell the legislature you can't afford to do what they are asking, you don't have any money." The Secretary of Resources [Douglas] Wheeler, and Governor Wilson, I think because he had been mayor of San Diego, got it. "Hey, this is a study we've got to do. Nobody has this information." So the idea was to collect: what has the Coastal Act requirement produced on the coastline? I define it as the economic engine of the California coastline? What does it mean? What are the diversity of incomes made off the ocean? Where are the ports and where are the fragile areas? I mean, it was a really comprehensive study. And putting economic

values on coastal activities like tourism on public beaches, boardwalks, aquariums, and aquatic parks.

I went off to Congress and was asking about how the Corma study was going? One day in Washington a woman named Judith Kildow^{xxx} came to see me. She said, "I've just gotten my PhD from MIT—from Woods Hole—and I did my PhD on your California Ocean Resources Management Act." And so, when Judith did her looking around for a PhD topic she said, "God, they're putting economic values on things like sea otters out in California. I want to study and write about this."

I'll tell you the story about why I remember the bill so much. Because she now teaches at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS), funded by a private family grant from the people who have made their money in the tuna business. And it's called the Center for the Blue Economy, centered at MIIS.^{xxx}

The center is providing graduate students with the opportunity to look at the economic models to determine the value of environmental resources. I used to give the example of environmental values in California using the timber industry. We used to say in the California legislature, and it was always a joke, but it wasn't, it was real—everybody in California loves trees. Yes, in politics everybody loves trees. Northern California industry likes the trees horizontal (laughs) and the Southern California tourists like the trees vertical. So everybody loves trees, but we can't agree on how many should be horizontal, cut down, and how many should be vertical, left standing. And we know the value of a cut-down tree, but we don't know the value of a standing tree.

I was just at lunch right here on the [Monterey] wharf for the first time in years. And the restaurant owner said, “Sam, your involvement in the ocean has changed the nature of the Monterey wharf. We’re booming with success. We’ve never been more successful, despite the fact that you don’t see all these fish markets on the wharf anymore. But we’re just filling these restaurants full of whale watchers. We’re making tons of money. After the people have been out on the ocean, they want to come eat at a seafood restaurant and talk about the trip. It’s just changed the nature of the wharf totally.”

I said, “You know, it’s interesting. We’ve learned that we’re making so much more money—remember, we used to be a whaling station here in Monterey. We have a restaurant called The Whaling Station. Davenport was a big whaling center. Point Lobos was a big whaling center. Monterey was a huge whaling center. And we’re making so much more money off of saving whales and watching them than we ever did off of hunting and killing whales.”

So the economic models are now putting value on what I call “the blue economy,” or environmental economics. The battles that I’ve seen waged in politics are all based around—there’s always talk of value, economic value. We know the value of oil. We don’t know what the value is of *not* drilling somewhere. Probably there are areas where you could drill safely, with a minimum of damage. And those ought to be highlighted. But we also know the value of, if you leave the Big Sur coastline pristine, leave it in its wilderness status, that it’s going to attract a lot more people and leave a lot more money behind, than if you’re having to deal with clean-up responsibilities, or visual pollution in a pristine area.

So the value, I think what we're moving into, and I've really been excited about seeing this movement—it's another one of those transitions that I've observed—is we're beginning to put economic value on leaving trees that are old and ancient as original forest, rather than just cutting them down because they are gigantic redwoods that are worth a lot of money as wood.

Locally, we made the argument against offshore oil drilling when it was proposed under the Reagan administration. We were trying to show how much oil was taken out, which was very little, from the estimates of oil that was underground—it would run the country for about forty days, (if you took it all out at once), which you can't do. But the risk to the sea otter range, to fishermen, to agriculture, to the local economy—the argument was that it's high risk, low gain. And we had economic data to show that the gain from oil drilling was so little, and the risk to existing economies that weren't polluting was really high. I think we need to have more of that argument on environmental pressure, but with economic data. So I think a lot of this stuff like the CORMA report is an interesting way to take an environmental resource and try to put economic values on it.

Reti: And did CORMA come out of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Committee that Jim Rote was staffing?

Farr: Yeah, I think it did. I don't remember the exact committee assignment. It's all in the historical record of the bill. But I'm sure it did. And it wasn't just CORMA. I mean, we'd had Exxon Valdez. Senator Barry Keene was carrying this Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act [of 1990] that created OSPR^{xxx}, the entity

within the Department of Resources that I talked about earlier in this oral history. OSPR created sort of a fire department response for oil spills in each of the harbors, so that if we had an oil spill, the equipment needed to capture or block and clean it up was on hand nearby. And that was paid for by the oil industry. It was a very controversial bill, but it was very smart to create that rapid response to oil spills.

And out of that, the sidebar was, what happens if you do have an oil spill and it affects the wildlife? Wildlife is valuable. We have this federally declared protected species called the California Sea Otter and the center for the sea otter is the Central Coast of California and the Monterey Peninsula. So in the analysis by insurance companies and others—the most valuable resource on the whole coast is the central part of California. Well, if we're going to build a marine mammal rescue station, and the highest value marine mammal is the sea otter, let's put the rescue center, the veterinary center in the Central Coast near the otter habitat.

So that's where I linked up the University of California's Long Marine Lab—we already owned the land in public ownership—we already had a marine lab there that was pumping water in from the ocean, and so all we had to do is get access to that water and build tanks, and we could have wildlife live in those tanks, and we could build a big veterinary center for marine life. So now the Department of Fish and Game operates a marine mammal rescue center among the marine science buildings of the state and federal government.

And that began the sense of, hey, we need a consortium of marine science activities located in one spot. This land is in public ownership, why don't we put

other entities there? So when I got into Congress, we put the National Marine Fisheries Lab there, a twenty-million dollar lab building. So you had Long's Marine Lab, owned by the University of California; you had the Seymour Center owned by a nonprofit. OSPY, California Department of Fish and Game has the Marine Mammal Rescue Center. You have the National Marine Fisheries there, which is federal. All of these buildings that are out there at this campus of marine activity are owned by a different entity. What a smart way to get collaboration, because they get all the, what I call the parking lot dialogue, where they say: "What do you do in your building next door?" "Oh, come on over and see my office and see what we're doing and maybe have lunch with me. What are you doing over there?" You get all this synergy and collaboration that you wouldn't otherwise get without co-location.

So we did a lot of work in California in that post-Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska. And Jim Rote was right in the middle of all of it, and what a dear, wonderful friend. He died of MS. And we set up a scholarship, a chair at the CSUMUB for Jim Rote, a chair in marine biology. He had an interesting life, if you want to go into it for a minute—

Reti: Sure.

Farr: Jim was an officer in the navy, in Vietnam, and had a pretty rough life there. He was skipper of a fast patrol riverboat, like the one that Kennedy was in. I just saw pictures of him in those days, but he looked like a man out of central coast casting—a long beard and big Bowie knife. Nothing on him. Just a bathing suit and shorts and sandals. He didn't look like (laughs) a navy officer. But they

were patrolling the rivers and they were in a lot of gunfights and things like that, and he saw a lot of death. And he decided after Vietnam to end his career at the Naval Postgraduate School to study marine science.

But when he got to the Naval Postgraduate School, the classes were all on marine warfare. And he'd become very upset about warfare and just really lost any interest in being a warrior. He kind of turned into a pacifist and was suffering from PTSD. He was a big fan of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, and in his free time he'd go to all these concerts. He finally ended up having just a meltdown in the navy and asking for a medical discharge. They had to make sure that he was really kind of nuts. So he told these great stories about how he told the navy psychiatrist that he worshipped Bob Dylan and his antiwar songs and things like that, to give the navy reasons to get rid of him. (laughs)

But he really was interested in marine sciences. So he got out of the Naval Postgraduate School and went over to Stanford's Hopkins Marine Station to get a master's degree. A bright guy. And he graduated with a doctorate degree in marine science from Stanford, along with Nancy Packard and all the people that started the aquarium [Monterey Bay Aquarium]. He was part of that group.

And the interesting thing is that another good friend of mine, who I dated just casually, was a schoolteacher in Carmel, and Jim got engaged to her. And she introduced me to him. That's how I got to meet Jim Rote. And then she caught me one day when I was a staffer in Sacramento and said, "God, my husband's got a PhD with distinction from Stanford in marine biology. There are no jobs

around here. He's just a part-time teacher; he's a substitute teacher, and he's driving me nuts. Can't you find him a job in Sacramento?"

I said, "Yeah, I'll try." So I went over to the assembly office of research and I said, "You know, here we got an office of research and we've got all these issues going on with oil spills and everything. Don't you think we need a marine scientist in here?" And the guy who ran it, and was a good friend, Bill Cure, said "Yeah, that sounds good. Got anybody in mind?" I said, "I know a guy who is really qualified." He said, "Does he know anything about politics?" I said, "No, he doesn't know a damn thing about politics. He's nonpartisan. He doesn't care. He just wants to do good science." So he said, "Send him up here and I'll interview him."

Jim got the job. Everybody fell in love with this guy because he was so smart. And he quickly caught on that you needed to talk to politicians in street talk rather than in PhD-ese. The legislators were curious as to what his opinions were on all this stuff going on with the coastline and oceans. So he was invited in to a lot of the policy making. And what he wanted to do when he left Sacramento—and when he got diagnosed with MS it kind of crippled him from ever doing it—but he wanted to be teaching scientists how to deal with public policy, how to be involved in creating it, rather than just saying, "I've got my credentials. And as a scientist, here is my opinion." He wanted scientists to help write the law and to understand the political fallout and costs. There's no free lunch. Jim understood that and could find compromise.

I use what Jim showed me. I taught a class in his name at CSUMB. And I [talked about] how scientists approached politics about global warming, where it went wrong. Scientists who did all the studies and were so proud of their conclusions, went off to public bodies like Congress or the state legislatures, and sort of gave their big academic credentials and all their PhD's and Phi Beta Kappas and everything: "I'm one of the most important scientists in the world and this is what's happening. And Congressman, you're going to have to shut down your coal plant and shut down this industry in your district to combat global warming." Congressmembers would ask, "What's going to happen to those people?" The scientist said, "Well, that's not our problem." And the public reaction and the political reaction is, "It is your problem because we're not going to do that. So if it comes down between your recommendation versus their lives, I'm sticking with the miners and the people who elect me." I think if history went back and reviewed how [climate change] was presented to the political world we wouldn't have this continuing opposition to the idea of global warming today. We would be collaborating more smartly on what to do about it.

So Jim was the kind of person who could see that and figured out, "Okay, here's how you got to talk to politicians and pull them into being part of the solution, rather than blaming them for just being the problem." He was remarkable. We still need that. When he passed away, it was a real shock to everybody. He was very close to the Coastal Commission staff and things like that. But Jim was the one who did the CORMA bill and set the baseline for California's Blue Economy.

Reti: I'm really glad we included that in the oral history, thank you.

Farr: Yeah.

The Impact of Proposition 13 at the State Level

Reti: So, yesterday we were starting, at the very end of our session, to talk about some broader questions that cover the period of time that you were in the California State Legislature. And we didn't really talk about Prop 13. I know we talked about it at the local level, and how it affected Monterey County, and the fact that you could kind of see what was coming because you had been working as a budget legislative analyst, so you knew what the effects were going to be.

Farr: Well, yes as a budget analyst for fiscal effects, but more as a consultant to the Constitutional Amendments Committee for legal effect. The California constitution gave the authority in the constitution to counties and cities and local governments, as a revenue base, to collect property taxes. So what I saw, the problem was that the legislature had nothing to do with the mechanism. You can understand sales tax: pretty simple. You just add up the bill and put a percentage on that, like the tip at a restaurant. But this assessing property, and who does it, and who is qualified to do it—and then how do you really—you can't go out and physically assess every single parcel of property in a county every year. You don't have enough manpower to do that kind of stuff. So you sort of look at the trends, the parcels that are moving. The Carmels are moving more frequently and at a higher price than the King Cities. So I understood all that stuff. Nobody at the local level—locals didn't understand much about tax authorities. They didn't know that the state had nothing to do with property taxes. They thought it was a state tax revenue or something. And the state didn't know how it's done at

the local level. So Jarvis and Gann took advantage of the confusion about what the hell property taxes were all about and were very successful.

When I was in the state legislature, we had some retreats at Davis Law School, educational retreats, where lawyers would just sit down and talk about: here's the problem that's been created by this awkward formula that the initiative created with Prop 13. And here are the winners and the losers, and here are the inequities that it's caused. But in order to solve it, if you want to keep it what we call "revenue neutral," that is, you may shift the burden from one person to another person, as long as the amount of money collected on the bottom line is the same. Because if you're going to try and change it to raise taxes and everybody is going to have to pay more, it ain't politically going to fly.

Reti: No.

Farr: So Prop 13 has had all the best legal mind and political minds in the world looking at how do we make it more equitable, but we've never been able to build a political consensus to adopt any recommendations. And I was in a lot of those discussions.

What the problems are, what Gann and—I don't think they intentionally figured this out, but this is the way the market forces went, is that historically the bulk of the property taxes were paid by the commercial sector, people that have the ability to raise rates and prices and everything like that. And the minority of the tax base was residential. And in those cases, those years, the residential property didn't turn over very often. People bought homes and lived in them all their lives. Commercial property, however, every time a company was merging or

expanding, property was being sold left and right. So when it froze, and the marketplaces started shifting, people started selling their homes because now they could go out and get equity loans and things like that. The whole new lending world had changed.

Reti: That wasn't something that was foreseen.

Farr: No. So then properties started changing more rapidly. Prop 13 says you assess the value; you pay the taxes on 1 percent of the value of the sales price. It's pretty simple. But you get complications—what happens when you gift the property? That's not a sale. No money is changing. So you have to figure out, okay, that triggers something, although you should have an exemption if your child wants to live in the house that they grew up in and you want to give it to them, you can do that.

So there was a lot of legislation going on about making a more equitable management of this mandate. But the bottom line is that commercial properties aren't changing hands that often, so the burden now is on the residential properties, who are paying proportionally a much greater share than they ever did before. And within the residential properties, two properties right next door to each other, exact same houses, but one sells this year, and one hasn't sold since 1970—they're paying taxes on the 1970 value. And the house next door is paying taxes on 1 percent of what they bought it for. If they bought it for a million bucks, they are paying 10,000 dollars a year. And the other house may be paying one thousand dollars a year. Now, they are in the same city, the same community, the same block, and they're receiving the exact same public services—police, fire,

and protection and so on. But their taxes are just not fair. So those are the inequities of Prop. 13.

Now, for elderly people who are living on limited incomes, and are owning their home and prices are going up—they benefit, because they're not selling that house. So it has protected them from what was happening before Prop. 13. So there are winners and losers from Prop. 13 all over the place. It just wasn't cleverly thought out or designed—it was more of an emotional reaction—and that's what passed and got locked into our State Constitution, which can only be amended by a vote of the people. It has problems, but getting support to change it just won't happen with the voters.

Reti: Some analyses that I've read have said that Prop 13 meant this tremendous loss of revenue for services, such as schools, and all local governments in California? Do you think that's true?

Farr: Oh, absolutely. Remember, they were the only ones collecting the revenue. None of it went to the state. So, in essence, under Proposition 13 the property taxes were cut by about 50 percent. So that meant schools got 50 percent less revenue; cities, counties, and special districts. Jerry Brown was a new governor. Jerry Brown was a very stingy, fiscally conservative governor. He was smart in economics. He said, "You know, we're going through some good times now. But there are going to be times when the economy is going to be sliding. So what we need to do, so the state isn't caught off guard, is that we need to save up on the money we're making. We're spending less than we're taking in. What everybody wants government to do is actually happening." So the state had a surplus.

Reti: That's one of the things Brown is known for, right?

Farr: Yes. And Gann and Jarvis come along and tell everybody, "Look, the government doesn't need your money. They've got a surplus in Sacramento!" Yes, it's true that they do. (laughs) Only none of that was property tax money because local governments had the property tax money and they didn't have a surplus. But it doesn't matter, in politics you say whatever you want to say. And they said it and people said, "Oh, government doesn't need the money. We've got to pass Prop. 13."

Well, what Prop. 13 did is these 58 counties, and 450 cities, and probably 1200 school districts, and 6000 special districts, all came to Sacramento, all unified, and said, "We've been raped. We've just lost 50 percent of our revenue. California, if you do have a surplus, bail us out until we get back on economic footing. Until we figure out what this Prop 13 means, bail us out." So about 1980, we started these new formulas of bailing out everybody. And then about 1990, in the early nineties, the state started saying, "Hey, we need to have money back because we're now in an economic mess."

Reti: That was during the recession of the early nineties?

Farr: Yeah, "We need it back and we can't keep giving you the money that we're collecting at the state level and just redistributing it to you. We need it back. We're not going to give it back to you because we can't afford to. The state is using it now to give the services we need." And it's been an ongoing state-local battle ever since. They didn't solve it.

So the state finally raised state revenue a couple of years ago under Jerry Brown's [Prop. 30 California Sales and Income Tax] initiative [of 2012]^{xxxii}, which was a shot heard around the world because this was the first time that taxpayers—because the legislature didn't have the guts to raise taxes because they couldn't get the 2/3 vote, the legislature could never solve the problem. So the governor went around the legislature and went to the people with an initiative ballot measure and California voters actually voted to increase taxes. All the politics said that will never happen. Voters will not vote to tax themselves. The legislature couldn't get a measure on the ballot, afraid of a "tax vote" hit piece in the next election. Well, the voters weren't afraid, and they did it. And that's why California is in pretty good financial shape today.

But Prop. 13 was a real monkey wrench. A lot of problems, implementing it. I don't know where the future goes. I don't think it will change. I don't think we'll ever— We've been briefed and counseled on what to do and we don't have the consensus of a majority to do it.

But I don't have to worry about this anymore. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs) No, you don't.

The Rise of the Initiative Industrial Complex in California

Okay, so just a couple more questions on the California legislature. Term limits: Proposition 198.

Farr: Yes, ever since working with the Constitutional Amendments Committee, I learned that initiatives are bad and legislative proposals are good. The reason is

in the legislature you have transparency. It starts with a bill to write the law. Each bill is heard in committee; it's got a lot of transparency; it can be amended. And then it passes the legislature after you've made all your compromises. Then it goes on the ballot, if a Constitutional amendment, and voters have a lot of information about it. And usually politics is the art of compromise, so you've whittled down the original idea and made it more fair, more thought out.

Initiatives, on the other hand are just: "I've got an idea and I've got a lot of money. I want to buy a law." You just write it and you don't get anybody reviewing it, saying, "This is smart, or bad, or you need to tweak the language." And usually you don't need to do it by initiative because you can introduce those ideas in the legislature. With 120 members, somebody is going to carry your idea. So initiatives—I mean, people ask me, "How should I vote on these propositions?" I say, "Look and see if it's a legislative initiative, or a street initiative. If it's legislative, it's really had a lot of scrutiny. Vote for it."

Reti: So wait, I'm going to ask you to explain because I don't quite understand—

Farr: There are only two ways you can amend the constitution in California. One is by legislative proposals—the other by signature gathering—each way the voters have to approve it. So you can present to the voters an idea that the legislature has toyed with and worked out and say, "Here's why we think the constitution needs to be amended to do such-and-such." Or you can do it by initiative, in which you just catch 8 percent of the votes that were cast for governor in the last statewide election, (and with lower voter turnout, that now means a lower number of signatures), and you now go out and you hire a firm—

you write the law. You don't care if it's good or bad, because something is bugging you and you're going to spend millions of dollars of your own money getting it made into law.

The problem with that is we are talking about a Constitution, basic framework law, not everyday statutory law. It's not a statutory bill. You can change statutory law by an act of the legislature. You can only change the constitution by either initiative, or an act of the legislature. And *then* by a vote of the voters statewide. It's designed to be used rarely.

The problem is people with money now who aren't satisfied with the legislature's attitude—either they don't want to deal with it, or they're dealing with it in a way that you don't like—will jump to the initiative process and say, “Oh, we know what's best for the state. We'll just buy the law.” And we allow that to happen in California.

Reti: So the initiative process goes back to the Progressive era, right?

Farr: Yeah, it was Hiram Johnson, in about 1910 or 1912. It was essentially a constitutional reform that went about under his leadership as governor. The enemy in those days was the railroad. The railroad would run everything. The railroad had all the money, controlled the state, controlled the politics. [Propositions] were an idea of how do we get around the stranglehold that the railroad companies have on the legislature? And that's why they created the ability for the people to do an initiative. And up until about 1978, it was used rarely. You'd usually have one people's initiative on the ballot and the others were legislative proposals. But after Jarvis and Gann had been so successful, the

people who make a living on running statewide campaigns said, “My God, there is so much more money to be made in going into the initiative business than by trying to elect somebody like Sam Farr to the assembly—“

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: “—he’s got all his human flaws and the campaigns will be nasty and bitter. The other side may have all this money to spend, and in the end we’re going to work our tail off and we’re not going to make very much money. We can do these initiatives with one hand tied behind our backs and we’re going to make a killing on it.”

So we started what has been nicknamed “The Initiative Industrial Complex.” That got all the political people who loved being in the business of running campaigns a whole new industry, so they can go out and poll and find out what people are upset about, and then go to some rich person and say, “How would you like to write a law?” And the person has a lot of passion about this particular field and says, “Yeah, I’ll put up a million dollars or more to help you get signatures. I’ll put money into the campaign.” The political consultant gets paid every inch of the way. So they’re in this business to keep the initiative business alive. Most states have a much better way to do it, where after the initiative is qualified it automatically becomes a bill in the legislature. What you learn in law school is every word can be interpreted one way or another. In the library business, you know the power of words. So there is some discretion to allow the legislature to tweak the language, so it has the same bottom line outcome. That’s a much smarter system, than it’s all good or all bad. We’re going to have a lot of

initiatives on this November [2016] ballot here—on legalization of marijuana, and on genetically modified organisms, and the list goes on and on.

Reti: So were term limits also a specific attack on the power of the legislature?

Farr: Yeah. Well, obviously you are attacking the power structure because you are saying, “We’re going to limit your time in office.”

Reti: Limit your time in office, but also limit how much money you would have for staff.

Farr: Well, that’s what nobody knows and you’re really smart to know that because it really radically changed politics in California. It was sold as just a term limit, but in that subsection was also a cutting of the legislature’s budget, *and* an elimination of any benefit package, retirement program, for elected legislators. So they’re not only limiting how much time you can spend in office; they’re limiting how much money you can spend, and they’re eliminating any benefit you could get from retirement. Which wasn’t lucrative. I mean, everybody thinks that when you get elected to office you get whatever the salary of the office is for your lifetime [after retirement]. It’s not true. I mean, every public sector, you have to work for five years before it vests, and then it’s only a percentage of your salary. California gives much higher percentages of your salary than the federal government does. For example, in the legislature I think it was 3 percent of the legislative salary that you got after you had served. There were no term limits then. Whereas in Washington, D.C., the salary of a retired congressman is 1 percent. So you can earn a lot less money in the California legislature and end up

with a much greater retirement package than you could in the federal government.

Reti: So the kind of position that you as had a staff person had back in the late sixties, early seventies in the legislature—would that sort of position exist after term limits and its accompanying cuts?

Farr: Well, I think a couple of things happened. The Constitutional Revision Commission stopped in the 1970s. We'd done all that work to take the Revision Commission's recommendations and get them into law, and get the California Constitution all cleaned up and have a state constitution that you could brag about, that was good government. But that started changing with all these initiatives, where they put all this statutory language that goes on and on and on. I mean, if you think about the Constitution, it's all very plainspeak.

Reti: Yeah.

Farr: You know, even the Bill of Rights is a great way to do it. But look at how much we're arguing over what is meant by the language of the Second Amendment, that in order to have a well-managed militia, a well-organized militia, which assumes that you're going to have legislation telling about a militia, in order to have a well-organized militia, the right to have a gun in your personal interest cannot be infringed. But it's one sentence long. That has now been interpreted to mean all kinds of things that I think the original drafters had no idea that it would mean.

So constitutional language should be the framework, not the details, not the rules. Whereas statutory law can be that. It's very specific, with dos and don'ts. You want constitutions to have a broad interpretation. You want statutory law to be very clear. And statutory law implements constitutional law. So yeah, when I finished that it kind of just dried up. The constitution is just so full of junk now, and so much stuff, that it's impossible to justly administer. And I think if you tried to take it out, there's so much passion, that people would think you were trying to be too liberal or too conservative. It's very difficult to tinker with it now.

Speaker Willie Brown

Reti: Okay, a couple of last questions on your time in the legislature. Is there anything else you want to say about Willie Brown?

Farr: I just loved Willie. I voted for Howard Berman, when Willie got elected Speaker. Because I had been a staff member at the legislature, a wonderful close friend, a personal friend, a social friend, Steve Thompson, who was chief of staff for Willie—he calls me one day. We were doing committee assignments. As freshmen, you sort of wait at the end of the line. Everybody senior gets in first and then you get something. So he calls me and he said, "The Speaker wants to create a new Committee on Economic Development and Technology in California and he thinks you'd be good because you understand it." I kind of laughed. I said, "I've never taken an economics course. I don't even know what you're talking about."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I said, "Can't I have another committee? I love resources stuff." He said, "How about a subcommittee on water?" I said, "No, no, no. I don't want to get into that. That's San Joaquin Valley politics, not Central Coast."

Reti: (laughs) You had just come from the water battles in Monterey.

Farr: I said, "I'll take that other one. I'll take that economic development committee." And I said, "What the hell am I going to do?" He said, "Well, you get to write the agenda. It's never been around before. You get to write the authorities of the committee. The committee jurisdiction determines where bills are assigned by the Rules Committee. You could write the committee responsibilities and you could get almost every bill in the legislature sent to your committee." I said, "I got it." (laughs) "Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very much. I'll go to work on it right now."

So I really had fun with that committee and it really taught me a lot because I got into the big picture of California economics. We knew California had centers of excellence. We're not just one thing. We're not an Iowa, that grows corn. We're a state that does more of everything than most nations of the world. Not only are we the biggest in agriculture, we're the most diversified. Over a hundred crops are grown in California. So I had this whole sense of this great state of California and all the diversity it has, and all the uniqueness that it has. And that was really helpful to me. And Willie was just letting me run with it, which was wonderful.

I was pretty easy to get along with and I was a big advocate of civil rights stuff. And I'm a pretty progressive vote. I was doing a lot of pictures of Willie and he got a kick out of those. And one year, I forget which year it was, he called me up

and he said, "Hey, I got some tickets to the academy awards. Do you want to take Shary?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Well, you'll go as my guests."

So we flew down to Hollywood and spent the night in a hotel. You get dressed about noon because everybody has to be in their seat at 4:00 o'clock because it's a live show. They want to do East Coast time, so it starts at 5:00 o'clock, which is 8:00 on the East Coast. So you're showing up all dressed in a tuxedo. The first thing that hit me was that everybody there—unlike the paparazzi, who are usually there in Levi's and ragged shirts at a black tie dinner—everybody, including the paparazzi and the reporters and everybody are all dressed in black ties and fancy gowns and hairdos all done up. Everybody drives up in a limousine, stretched just as far as the eye can see. It's just unbelievable. You know, you don't think of LA—when you look out on the freeway and see that traffic jam—that's the first thing that hit me is going in, I've never seen a traffic jam with nothing but limousines.

Reti: (laughs) No!

Farr: As far as the eye can see—black ones, white ones; long ones, short ones. Just every kind. It was unbelievable. And then you pull up to the entrance to unload. It was funny because Willie got out and you heard the crowd, this crescendo of everybody kind of yelling the minute they opened the door. And then somebody yells, "Oh, he's nobody."

Reti: (laughing)

Farr: And as I'm getting out of the car, "They're nobody." (laughs) Oh, and then the crowd just quiets down. They're looking for somebody they know.

Reti: They're all waiting for the big movie stars.

Farr: Yeah. So anyway, we had a great time at the academy awards and the parties afterwards.

What I liked about Willie—and he taught me something too—that when you're part of a team and you're part of a political philosophy—think about how the Democrats and the Republicans have a different philosophy—you buy into the trust that your colleagues have. We are all here to be lawmakers. You took your needs to Willie to get his backing. You start by giving all the background to the problem. I'd have to tell the story. Willie would have no patience for stories. He said, "I don't want to know the background. What do you want? What do you want?" He said, "If you want it, I'm going to help you, just tell me what you want, not why," (he never described it this way) but it was essentially, "You're on my team. I'm asking what you want. That's all I need to know and I'll tell you whether I can help you or not. But don't give me the reasons why you're doing—what was broke and why it broke and who is in favor of it. I don't care. The only one I care about is you."

Reti: So was that hard for you? Because you seem like a story guy to me.

Farr: Well, it was. But then I finally got it and said, once you have his trust that's it. So I've actually adopted his counsel. When people come in to see me I say, "Well, what do you want?" And they were kind of surprised, "Well, let me tell

you a story.” “I don’t care what the story is. What’s broken? I’m here to fix it. I’ll do it or I won’t.”

And there’s a wonderful story. Assemblyman Jack Knox is a wonderful legacy legislator from the East Bay and founder of the first regional planning entity, the Bay Area Development Committee. He was a big local government guy and chair of the Local Government Committee. He told the story when I was a staffer that one day a local government bill came in and it was supported by the League of Women Voters. This woman had worked very hard on giving her testimony and why the bill was necessary. It goes to his committee and he’s chairing the committee, and like a good chairman you want to expedite stuff. So he just announces to the committee, “The next bill up is AB such-and-such.” And he said, “The staff and I have reviewed the bill. There’s really no concerns. I’ve talked to the author. There are a couple of amendments to tweak it and make it better. But I’ve reviewed it, and if there’s no objection I’ll just have unanimous consent that we pass the bill out.”

And there was no objection and he gavels it out. And the woman is sitting there to testify and she says, “Well, what about my testimony?” She said, “Chairman, I’ve worked very hard on this testimony. I worked all night and I came up here. Don’t you want to hear me?” He leaned over and he said, “Do you want good order, or do you want a bill? If you want good order, you’re not going to get a bill. Because we don’t have time to sit here and listen to you. The bill is passed.”

So the point of it is, hey, if we’re capable of responding, we don’t have to take a lot of time to have this touchy-feely feel good, I’m going to build a trust

relationship with you. Now, some things take longer and members need to be educated. But others are common sense and can be approved without a lot of talk. To get votes, you have to understand what it is. But Willie was just so good at pushing things through. (snaps fingers)

He also had—and I've never seen any other leader have it—he had a long vision. He would take bills that he totally loved, or issues that he totally loved—somebody else might be carrying the bill and doing all the work on it—but Willie would keep track. Sometimes unexpected issues would stop progressives; something would flip at the end to make the bill less than perfect, and then Willie would shift from supporting the bill to killing the bill. And you thought, “Why? We are so close; maybe compromise is okay if we get a bill? We have deadlines. This must pass now. If killed, it means this whole bill, all this effort, this whole year, and it's going to die because now you're working against it.” And his point was, “Yeah, but there's next year.” Nobody ever thought we could get the better bill by thinking ahead.

Reti: Because he was there a long time.

Farr: He could see the politics and what would blossom and continue and what would fade out. He had that vision, to be able to say, “Hey, we'll do it next year and we'll get it done better.” (laughs) There are so many Willie Brown stories. (pauses) Some of them I can't even tell. (laughs)

But anyway, I haven't seen him in a long time. But I have great pictures of Willie and admired his ability to handle— I watched him in caucus oftentimes, when we'd have a controversial bill in the caucus. He was the Speaker and the leader

of the Democratic Party, but he would sit in caucus and not say anything. The majority leader would lead the caucus discussion: how are we all going to vote on this bill? And members would say, "I can't vote for it for the following reasons"—this or that. And he'd just listen very patiently. And at the end, when he felt the consensus was being developed and could see that there were not enough votes to pass the bill, Willie would weigh in. He'd say, "Well, here's what I think we ought to do." And he would come up with ideas that nobody in the room—and there were a lot of smart people in the room—had even thought of. And suggest that we do it that way. And you'd go, "Oh, my God. Why didn't I think of that?" Or he'd tell people, "Look, you can't vote for this bill. Your district will not allow you to vote for this bill. But *you*. You're in a safe district. Don't give me any of this, "I can't support this bill," stuff. Maybe some lobbyist has talked to you and doesn't want you to vote for this bill. You're voting for this bill and *you're* not voting for this bill. We're going to protect our membership."

They don't ever do that anymore. Nancy Pelosi does it a little bit. But she doesn't ever do it saying, "You're not going to vote and you're going to have to vote." But she certainly—when people say, "I can't vote on a bill," and we saw this all the time when we got the health care bill, which it was down to every single vote that counted, and we had a dozen people who weren't going to vote over their dead body. And one by one, after talking to her— The reason she could convince them was because she knew their district, their votes, their contributors better than they did. And she knows when you can push the envelope to do something that might be very controversial but still you have the capability of getting re-

elected. And that's leadership. That's leadership. And Willie was the best at it. Nancy Pelosi is the best at it in Congress.

"The Team of California"

What was interesting was—and I never found this in Congress—the social life in Sacramento was really important. And that's because in Sacramento everybody—I mean, what you build in Sacramento is this incredible esprit de corps about California. Everybody there is from one place, called California. You are either from rural California or urban California—big urban, like LA, or small communities like Monterey or Carmel.

Reti: Would we be considered urban or rural?

Farr: Well, depending on how rural you want to get, we'd be urban, and depending on how urban you want to be—we're not that big.

But the thing is, everybody is on this team. It's called the Team of California. Because every single thing you're doing up there in the State Capitol is about the state of California, unlike Congress, where you're doing it for your district and state, and nobody is like anybody else. So there's no sense of national—except when we're probably at war—national pride—that we're all in this thing for the good of the whole, which is the total of the United States of America. Because what's good for California ain't going to be good for— You know, gun control in California is not going to be gun control in Texas or Georgia or Iowa. Very rarely do you see a vote that is good for the nation, if it isn't good back home. Congress is regionalism.

But Sacramento had this—nothing even described and not defined—but it had a sense of: hey, we work hard here. We’ve got a great staff. We’ve got a great job. And we’re going to do serious stuff that we’re doing and debating on. We take our jobs seriously. In Sacramento at 5:00 o’clock, it was like a regular working day, we’re out. But most members are not going home. Everybody lives there in apartments. So let’s go to dinner! And you got to a local restaurant and you’re sitting there with the Republicans that you’ve been arguing with all day long. But you’re telling jokes. And, “You want to go skiing this weekend? What are your kids doing?” I mean, it was really a wonderful social life. It got bad just before I left, where the Republicans started—because they had always been in the minority, and somebody said, “Stop being so nice to the Democrats. You guys, they’re just playing you. You’re never going to win these elections. You’re never going to be in the majority. You’ve got to get hardball and stop being friendly with them. And giving them votes.”

And that began this sort of meltdown. I had a friend who said, “Sam, I—” We used to eat at Frank Fat’s, this old watering hole in Sacramento—

Reti: Oh, yeah. I know that place.

Farr: He said, “I can’t have dinner with you.” I said, “Why?” He says, “Oh, my caucus is all over me. We’re not supposed to be socializing with Democrats anymore.” I said, “Oh, God. That can’t be serious.” He said, “Yes, it is.”

But I’d organize ski trips and sometimes more Republicans would go than Democrats. And we’d always have a great time. We did a lot. It was really fun.

I think going to Washington, you realize that you're much more of a loner in Washington, even though it's a bigger pool. It's 435 people, rather than 120 [senators and assemblymen] in Sacramento. There's only 80 people in the state assembly, so you're going from a body of 80 people, to a body of 435 people. They're scattered all over the county and they have totally different views on the country and perspectives—some very conservative, some very liberal.

I think the extremes on the either end are not very practical. Rather than just following your conservative ideology or liberal ideology, so much of it, in order to get it done, you got to compromise. But now your vocal constituents don't want to compromise. If you do, you get criticized for compromising on your values. We're not compromising on our values. We're compromising on whether we get something better, maybe half a loaf of what we wanted, but isn't half a loaf better than nothing at all? That's my philosophy.

Deciding to Run for the United States House of Representatives

Reti: So what motivated you to want to leave the State Capitol, the assembly, and run for Congress?

Farr: That's a great question. That's a great question, because I didn't. I was very happy in the assembly. I was chair of a committee that was very active.

Reti: Which committee was that?

Farr: I went from the Economic Development Committee and the Trade, and Technology Committee, to being chair of the Local Government Committee. My dream was to build local governments—which I had come out of. I wanted to

empower nonpartisan locally electeds to see they had the authority to fix things. Local government is where change starts. New ideas start there. But often, local electeds think the state or federal government has to solve the problem. I wanted to build a well-informed local government that could feel comfortable working with state legislators. I learned, while serving in local government, that in politics nobody knows what anybody else is doing. And therefore, people are chasing a lot of rumors and a lot of false starts, and nobody is really trying to build a consensus for—how do we solve these big problems that we all have to be involved in solving? I don't think we've done anything to improve it at all in the last years. All governments are captive of the silo they are in. I wanted to build regional collaborations that were inclusive of local, state, and federal administrative authorities, a one stop at the local level. I was really happy [in Sacramento] because I was being able to at least start all that stuff, and communicate with mayors and councilmembers and school board members and things like that.

So the vacancy comes up in my Congressional district. And I'm sitting there thinking, do I want to run for this?

Reti: That was when Leon Panetta got—

Farr: Yeah, Panetta hadn't campaigned much for Clinton, but he was a classmate of Al Gore's. So when Clinton was the president-elect and he's putting together his cabinet, and he's getting advice for his cabinet and things like that, Al Gore said, "On your fiscal policy, you've got to call Leon Panetta. He's been chair of

the budget committee. He knows more about the budget than anybody in Congress. He's a good guy."

So Clinton invites Leon back to Little Rock, where he was setting up his transition team and talks to Leon, and likes him, and offers him a job. He says, "Why don't you be my budget guy and come back here and run the federal budget for me at the Office of Management and Budget?" And Leon—I don't know what went through his mind—but he accepted, so therefore announces that he's going to go work for the president now. The president hasn't been sworn in and he hasn't been appointed, so you don't really quit until you are confirmed by the Senate and sworn in as a cabinet member. Standard procedure is to write the governor of your state, saying you are resigning from elected office. The governor then has to call for a special election.

The House of Representatives is the only body in Washington where you have to be elected. There are no appointments. There are appointments to the Senate, appointments to the Supreme Court. Even the president of the United States has been appointed, when Gerald Ford ended up being the president. He never ran for vice president. He was appointed vice president when Spiro Agnew was indicted. And then no one thought Nixon would leave and Nixon leaves! And here's the appointed vice president, Gerald Ford, all of a sudden president of the United States. Not a vote had been cast for him. But in the House of Representatives—you don't get there unless you are elected. So Governor Wilson had to declare a special election to fill Leon's seat. And by then, I had to make my mind up.

The other thing that really struck me as I got into public office, and looked back at my time in the state legislature, I looked back on my father's career, who was a very successful state senator. In 1962, he'd been working on his national legislation on highway beautification. And President Kennedy called him into the White House, wanted to meet him. My father was very honored. A state senator from California is going to meet the president of the United States. And the president says, "I understand there's going to be an open seat for Congress, in your district. And Bobby Kennedy, my brother and I, have been talking to the Democratic leaders back there and we think you'd be the best person qualified to run for that seat." He was a little worried about it being tough on the family and everything like that. And Kennedy said, "Well, we'll back you. My brother, Bobby, will help you with the campaign and everything like that."

So my father comes back home, you know like on Cloud Nine. (laughs) "Oh, my god. There's an open seat. The Republican candidate is an assemblymember and I think I can beat him. And the seat was sort of designed with Democrats in mind and I think I can win this seat. And wouldn't it be cool to be in Washington?" And the family says, "No. Are you kidding? Who wants to move from Carmel to Washington, D.C.?" And my mother, she died before we could ever have this conversation, but I'd really like to know what went on with her. Because I sort of remember her saying, "You know, we lived there during the war years and it's hot and humid in the summer. And I love Carmel and I love my friends." Nobody thought of getting elected and commuting, which is what they do today. So after the family just dumped on his idea, he called the Kennedys and said, "Thank you, but no thank you. I'm not going to run." That was in 1962.

The interesting thing about it is that the Republican nominee, the assemblymember, died right after being nominated. So in the middle of summer, the Republicans don't have a candidate. The Democrats, I forget who they recruited, but he wasn't very strong. And the Republicans ended up going to their central committee in Monterey County and nominating Burt Talcott, who had been chair of the board of supervisors. He was the one they zeroed in on. Burt ran and got elected. He was from Salinas. He got defeated many years later by Leon Panetta. So that original seat would have been the seat that my father would have held forever. I'm sure nobody would have beaten him.

So when it came my chance, I realized that my dad, for family purposes, didn't do what he was most prepared to do. He had a lot of federal friends and had lived in Washington, D.C.; he had a lot of law friends—just everything needed to be elected. He would have been a natural for it. But he declined it. I had seen his disappointment on his face because he had to pull out. I felt that he really regretted not having tried. And so long story, I decided I don't ever want to have to regret. Because if I ran, I had a good chance of winning, although there were twenty-seven other people that filed, including Bill Monning, and including the chair of the board of supervisors, a very popular chair, Barbara Shipnuck, and lots of other prominent people, lawyers and everybody. It was a huge race in spring of 1993.

But I thought, well, worst-case scenario is, I'm an assemblymember and I'm still in my term. If I lose the Congressional race, I'm still an assemblymember. I can run for another term before I'm termed out in the assembly. But the Senate seat opens up and I can run for that. Congress was not a pass on at that time but an

opportunity I couldn't pass up. And with term limits, Henry Mello is going to term limit out in 1996, so in 1996 I could run for the State Senate, and I could be in the State Senate for eight years and then I'd have to retire. Running for Congress was low risk. I chose to do so because I had a mission.

The Fort Ord Re-Use Authority

[The mission was] I was very involved in this Fort Ord Reuse group that Leon put together. First, it was how to save Fort Ord and then when they found out it was really closing, it was all about reuse. Leon was turning to me and Henry Mello, because we'd both been county supervisors, "You guys know local government even more than I do. What do you think would be appropriate reuse of Fort Ord?" That's when we came up with the idea of a university. And I just knew that we would never get a university out of the military, and probably wouldn't get it out politically, if I didn't go to Washington. Because Seaside and Marina were going to block it. They didn't want a university in their communities. And they hired lobbyists to go up to Sacramento to try and stop the Mello bill creating FORA (Fort Ord Resuse Authority).

What Mello and I decided, with Leon's help, is, look, we've had this working group with all of these cities to try to prevent Fort Ord from closing. We've kind of identified that Fort Ord is a regional asset. It doesn't just belong to Seaside, or Marina, or the county of Monterey. The whole economics of it have spilled over onto all of these regional communities. And it's such a massive piece of real estate, 27,000 acres, the size of San Francisco. We can't just leave it up to a couple



Leon Panetta, Sam Farr, and Bill Clinton walking on stage together at the inauguration of the California State University, Monterey Bay campus. 1995. Photo: Courtesy of Greg Pio

Pio, Greg, "Leon Panetta, Sam Farr, and Bill Clinton at the CSUMB Inauguration Ceremony" (1995). *Photographs*. 11.

https://digitalcommons.csUMB.edu/samfarr_photos_all/11

of local politicians to decide what's going to become of all of that. We need to really have regional management, a sort of city council for Fort Ord.

So that's how FORA, the Fort Ord Reuse Authority was designed—to be made up of the representatives from all of the Peninsula cities, plus the board of supervisors, plus the state assemblymember, senator, and congressmember. And that bill was in the state legislature. I was co-sponsor, but when I got elected to Congress I had to drop out. But Henry and I were on really good terms and we kept that focus. I said, nobody in Washington knows FOR A. I need to take all my knowledge about the base and re-use plans to Washington. Unless I go, it won't get done right.

I didn't want to go because I didn't want to leave what I had in Sacramento. I was a big fish in a small pond and I was going to be a little tiny fish in a huge pond. I didn't look forward to that. But I had a reason for going. I always tell people when they come to me and say, "Oh, I'd like to run for Congress," I say, "Well, what do you want to do?" "Well, I want to run for Congress." "No, I understand that. But what do you want to do? Why do you want to be in Congress? It's a tool. What do you want to use the congressional tool to do?" "Oh, I hadn't thought about that." I say, "Well, then you shouldn't run. When you figure out what you want to use the tool to do—" Like I was figuring, okay, I'll use Congress to get a new university at Fort Ord and do a lot of other things. But I had a reason to really—and a hungry reason. I mean, it was passion. And it was a tough campaign with all these candidates and everything. I think that kept me ahead of the pack because I really knew why I wanted the office and I conveyed that, I think, effectively.

Reti: That's really interesting. It makes sense to me that that would have been the reason. Well, then, can we dive into Fort Ord a bit?

Farr: Sure.

Reti: Because that was definitely on my list. So Fort Ord—just for a little history for people who might be reading this in the future—it had been around since, what, 1917, when land was purchased by the federal government to create a military base.

Farr: Yes, Fort Ord—I think you've got the dates right. Well, remember that the Monterey Peninsula—and I think people forget this—this was established by the military. It was the Spanish military that sailed their ships in here and created the Presidio of Monterey. The other people on the ship were Spanish padres who had volunteered to go live on the frontier and to take the Native people, if there were any, and convert them to Catholicism. So you had two political goals here. One was protection from Russian fur traders moving south. The other was the religious community being here to “civilize” the Native people. The Spanish government (Mexico hadn't declared its independence yet, hadn't become independent yet) was very much worried about the Russian government, which was coming down from the north for the sea otter trade. And they thought, once they get a presence harvesting sea otters and sea lions and all the furs and that, they're going to stay around, and then they're going to end up colonizing and becoming a political force. Nobody is trying to stop them, so why don't we get some people up there. These missionaries are willing to go and take on this task. So that was the reason the Spanish came north.

Reti: So it comes back to the sea otter again.

Farr: Well, the sea otter, and they also were looking for parts to resupply because their boats that were sailing from the Orient were using the Humboldt Current to come south back to Mexico. These boats started in Mexico and sailed west to the Philippines etc. but needed the Humboldt Current to get home. The sailors were also all dying of scurvy. They didn't know what scurvy was. They thought it was lack of fresh water. It was really the lack of Vitamin C and things like that. But they had written in their ship's logs that when they passed this coastline here, there was an interesting port (it looked like it would be an interesting port), in Monterey. So when they sailed north, they were looking for this interesting port, and they came to Monterey.

So the military presence here was prominent and the Presidio of Monterey is probably the oldest continuous use military property in the United States now, because the Eastern military forts and enclaves were all made into national monuments and national parks. So we've got an active duty Defense Language School here now.

So Fort Ord—it was natural as they were trying to prepare for World War I, and looking for training places, to come here. The military was already here, so it was just expanding their mission. And then as World War II built up, they were requiring a lot of real estate. And we've got this place in California, and it's on the West Coast, and we're going to be sending soldiers into the Pacific, so why don't we train them out there in California? I mean, the history was much more detailed than that, but that's the reason that Fort Ord got bigger and bigger and

bigger. And after World War II, then we started the Korean War and the Vietnam War. And the military was expanding left and right. And this training base actually changed its mission to being what they called Lightfighter, because the military wasn't just going to have, like you see in the movies, just this echelon of battalions of soldiers marching into war. It was now going to be very elite and very stealth, in the sense of: we'll fly them in helicopters, and we'll have platoons of people trained to be war fighters on the ground. And we're going to get them in there with lightfighter high tech weapons and small groups, a band of men that would be your front line, first responder fighters.

Reti: So that's where we get the name for Lightfighter Drive that I passed on the freeway coming here today?

Farr: Yes, that was the military term from Fort Ord. Remember when the army went to Panama? Fort Ord mobilized our troops and went to Panama and captured Noriega. Actually, the soldiers who did that came out of Fort Ord, out of the Seventh Infantry, and they took off in these gigantic planes from the Monterey Airport, the biggest planes that the military has. But because of the weight of the military and their equipment, and the weight of the aircraft fully loaded with gasoline, they could not take off with a full tank of gas. So they either—I forget the story—refueled in the air, or they landed in Texas and refueled before they went on to Panama, but deployed from Monterey airport.

So the military decided, look, Fort Ord is a first responders' military base, home of the Seventh Infantry. They're trained to be war fighters. And it's kind of awkward to get them out of there. How do you get them deployed? Even though

there's a rail line, and we can take them by rail, that's slow, and traffic is really slower. And the airport really can't handle these big planes. So we're going to close Fort Ord and move the Seventh somewhere else.

Reti: So the closure wasn't because of the Cold War ending?

Farr: Yes, well that's part of it. BRAC [Base Realignment and Closure] was the downsizing of military missions and real estate—Congress orders it by legislation asking^{xxxx} the services to submit their list of how they want to downsize their real estate and how they want to reorganize within. Depending on the service, some may want to close some places. They may want to re-orient to have a different mission at that place. Or they may want to close half of it and keep half. They can do anything they want. It's up to each of the services. They do it independently of anybody else. They have what they call a COBRA model, where they put all this information into a big computer and then the computer spits out the pieces of real estate that they think you ought to close. It's probably an effective model, if you're just starting en masse, with all the military ownership around the world. Unfortunately, it doesn't measure intellectual capacity. And what we were providing at Fort Ord and at the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute is all high-end academic training. And you know, they can value the value of a parachute school, but they can't value the value of a master's degree program, or the value of a linguist.

So Fort Ord was on that list. It was the largest training base in the United States that was closed. It was a shock to us because we all thought, for several

reasons—one, is the importance of what they were doing at Fort Ord, which had modernized to be the home of the light infantry; and because it was surrounded by all these other institutions of higher learning that this was just a consortium of military interests that would never be tinkered with. But nonetheless, the Pentagon put it on the list and it survived the scrutiny of the White House. When the White House gives the list to Congress, it's an up or down vote. Because every congressman will say, "Amend the bill to take mine out." So the law requires up or down as the list is submitted. If you don't want to vote for it, fine, but it's all or nothing.

So Fort Ord got in that all or nothing—and it passed. And all of a sudden, we're screwed. So Leon, he was up for re-election in 1992. I haven't really talked to him about it, but I'm sure that he went through a process of thinking: maybe I'm really vulnerable now, because we were going to lose Fort Ord. Everybody was counting on me and my high ranking in Congress, that I could stop this cut. Nonetheless, it was on the list. So he decided, let's keep our team together—instead of everybody going through the shock effect of—we lost. The "Save Fort Ord Team" tried so hard to save it and we lost. But instead of arguing the bitterness of that—he just immediately said, "Everybody who worked on trying to save it—let's be part of the new direction of what are we going to do with it. What are our options?"

The announcement of closure started the cities of Marina and Seaside thinking they didn't need others telling them what to do with the army lands inside their city boundaries because years before they had paper-annexed the population centers of Fort Ord. So the city of Seaside annexed just north, up to about

Lightfighter Drive, the entrance of Fort Ord. So they claimed all the buildings and houses there as part of Seaside, so that they could get the population count and increase the state subventions by ten thousands more people. And they didn't have to provide one ounce of services to them because they're all in the military and they have their own police, fire, and everything. To these cities, it new money with no responsibility. Cities didn't have to do anything on the military base. You could just count them as residents of Seaside and get more money. Money is distributed by formula, sales taxes and other taxes that are given out are all done by formula; so the more people you have, the more money you get. So it was very clever to make this tweak and then get a lot more money for it. Marina did the same thing.

No one ever thought the base would close. And all of a sudden, here it is closed. And they go, oh, my god. We've annexed that property without a shot being fired, without anybody knowing it. We get to decide what's going to happen to Fort Ord. And Leon's committee with all these other mayors now suggesting things, "We don't like it. It's ours!" They don't have any power. The overlying city and the county have the zoning authority.

Well, that scared the hell out of everybody. And somebody said, "Well, what about trying to get a university here?" I was working on that. [The cities] said, "We don't want a university. We don't want all those college kids here. Look what happened to Santa Cruz!"

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So Marina and Seaside tried to get Sam Karas, who is the county supervisor for the district, to enter into an MOU between the two cities and the county, to form a Joint Powers Redevelopment Authority. It would cover 99 percent of all the land at Fort Ord; they would be the Re-Use Authority under federal law. Sam Karas was lobbied heavily but he was a wonderful guy. He just held out. It was incredible pressure on him by the mayors of Seaside and Marina. And he just said, "I'm not doing this. We were a team of a whole bunch of communities. I'm working with Mello. I want to have a team approach to this." He held out, so they couldn't create this MOU to be a designated reuse authority. Meanwhile, Mello passes the bill creating FORA and the rest is history.

In the meantime, Seaside and Marina had said that they didn't want a university. And all of us—Mello and myself and a few others—that was our highest priority. We could deal with all of this other stuff with Fort Ord, but what we've got to get from the state of California is a university. And the state of California, under the Joint Council of Higher Education that makes location decisions dinged the idea because their Master Plan for Higher Education said the next CSU campus that was going to be built was going to be in the San Fernando Valley. And this Fort Ord came along in the middle of nowhere and they were opposed to it.

Well, Mello had more authority as legislator than they did. Theirs was just merely a recommendation. And he just said, "Heck, no, because I'm really interested in serving the underserved population and so is my assemblyman, Sam Farr. We want to get the farmworkers into an educational program. And besides that," we told the state, "and besides that you get about a billion dollars of free real estate. And if you're going to go build a campus anywhere else,

you're going to have to buy the land. Where's the money? There ain't no money." I convinced him to put language in the bill making both UC and CSU re-use authorities under state law.

Now, I'm glad I'm telling this story because I think this is so important and such a wonderful story, but also very, very clever. I'm sort of bragging about it. When I was running for Congress at that time and serving in the assembly, this colonel came up to me at Fort Ord. We were talking about the reuse of Fort Ord property and he was saying, "You know the BRAC process—the Pentagon determines how you're going to reuse Fort Ord." I said, "No, local governments determine how we're going to use Fort Ord." He didn't understand local governments very well. And I said, "And we're going to get a university there." He just looked at me, and he said, "Assemblymember, obviously you haven't been in Washington, but you're never going to get a university." I said, "Colonel, I'm running for Congress so that we can get a university. And you know what? I'm also going to get you to pay for it." And he just sort of said, "Well, that will be the day." Usually they're very formal, but he just said, "Well, that will be the day."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So I'd made this bet that I could convince Congress to use DOD appropriations to pay for the start of a new university. You asked me the reason why I had the passion for getting there [to Congress]. The day I was sworn in [I began working on] how do I get a university at Fort Ord? I was a brand-new Democrat in Congress. I'm vulnerable in the next election. I don't know anything. But I learn quickly because I knew from the state assembly that you go

to the people who are chairs of the committees. They are powerful people and they've been around for a long time. Jack Murtha from Pennsylvania was chair of the Defense Appropriations Committee and had jurisdiction over everything military, including Fort Ord. The Appropriations Committee has all the money. I said, "Jack, I just had a tough election and I'm going to have a tough re-election. I need you to do me a favor. I'm going to get a university built at the former military base." He said, "Well, that sounds like a great idea." I said, "Swords to ploughshares. It will be a great story. And it will be a great demonstration of how to reuse military property." He said, "I like that." I said, "But I need sixty million dollars." He said, "Don't worry, I got it." Earmarks.

I'd been head of LAFCO; I'd been on the board of supervisors, I'd been chair of the Assembly Local Government Committee. I thought, oh, my god. I know what's going to happen. Mello's bill gives FORA the jurisdiction for master planning the re-use. The majority vote on FORA is made up of the communities that own real estate on the base by weighted vote. So that's the county of Monterey, Seaside, and Marina. And if they can get the Del Rey Oaks and the Sand Cities to go along with them, which they're a lot closer to than the Carmels and Pacific Groves and Montereys—there's a little political class warfare here on the Monterey Peninsula—they're going to be able to block this university.

So I called up Henry Mello. He was wonderful. I remember the conversation to this day. I said, "Henry, you've got to write us two sentences in your bill. You've got to amend it and do it right away. Put in there that for purposes of transfer, the California State University and the University of California are reuse authorities." And he said, "Okay." I said, "It's the only way we're going to get

the university. Just trust me.” He said, “Well, you know this stuff better than I do.” I said, “Yeah, just put it in your bill.”

A couple of days later I get a call from the president of the University of California systemwide, very polite, saying, “Congressman Farr (all the niceties go by)—and he says, “I’m calling you because I understand from Senator Mello that you put this language in his bill. You have to understand that the University of California never wants to see earmarks in its favor. We just bid, and if we bid on stuff, we win our fair share. And we don’t think we ought to get singled out.” I said, “Mr. President, I listened to this all the time when I was in the assembly. I love you. My grandfather was a regent. I love the University of California. I didn’t get in, but I love Berkeley. But just trust me. This is one thing I know a lot about: local government. You’ve got to keep that language in there. As far as I’m concerned, just forget we ever had this conversation. Just leave it in there and ignore it. Because you’re only going to be earmarked for one moment of one day, and that’s when this title goes from the United States Department of Defense to you, to get all this free land.” They were interested in the land; they just didn’t want to be earmarked. I don’t know how they thought they were going to get it.

Reti: Now wait, I know the answer to this, but can you just explain for the oral history—why is the University of California involved in this, as well as California State University?

Farr: Because when Henry and I were—he was state senator and I was assemblymember in the late seventies, early eighties after passage of Prop. 13—the city of Santa Cruz had this big struggle with the University of California. Its

campus was this 800-pound gorilla in this small city, on the side of a hill. And the city felt like, "We've got to provide all the infrastructure for traffic and water and all the supplies. We don't get anything out of it. They don't pay any taxes. They're getting too big."

UCSC was proposing a research park next to the university to attract private sector investment, much like the Stanford Research Park in Palo Alto. This was not too long after the Vietnam War, when progressive liberals hated defense contractors. Santa Cruz already had Lockheed doing business in Santa Cruz County, with their test station up in the remote mountains in the northern part of the county. It tested guidance systems for their rocket research. The activists didn't want more Lockheeds in this county. I mean, if you build a campus research center it's going to be dominated by the military industrial complex and our antiwar activities are going to get stomped on because all of a sudden there will be money and all that stuff." That was the argument.

So the county passed an initiative in 1978 or 1980, using their zoning authority, saying they would not allow those things to be built. And the University, on the other hand, was complaining. They said, "We want to be a first-class research university. We've got to have research parks. We can't do it all our own. Look at Stanford and the success of the Stanford Research Center." That was just the model for the country. "We want our own Stanford research park next to the university."

So the university got murdered by the city; the blocking measure passed. So Henry and I went through that, and probably had a foot in both doors, realizing both sides were right.

And then when Fort Ord came along I said, "Henry, we've got this great opportunity. We've got all this real estate. We can name it for anybody we want. We can put the University of California's research park at Fort Ord and we'll create this campus for CSUMB. And you know, this will be the first place in California, the only place, where both higher education systems, CSUMB and UC and frankly, the community college that is down there [Monterey Peninsula College] can all be in one place. Aren't we trying to get them to be more collaborative and work together? When you think about it, the undergraduate students can go do their research in the research park at the University of California. And they can get their PhD's from UCSC, because the CSU system can't give PhD's. Re-use of Fort Ord could be that dream of collaboration of all three segments of California higher education."

Henry said, "You're absolutely right." So that was our vision. We weren't going to allow anybody to stop us, not even our own constituents, like Seaside or Marina. We outsmarted them because we had the power to do so, by smartly writing legislation. And even though Seaside and Marina hired lobbyists to go up and lobby, people didn't lobby against Mello's bill. Lobbyists tried to convince assemblymembers and senators by saying the local communities don't like this idea Mello has put together. They said, "Look, Henry is on the Rules Committee. Henry can be an SOB. If we vote against his bill, he'd kill our bills.

My bills wouldn't get out of the Senate Rules Committee. We're not going to mess with Henry."^{xxiv}

Reti: Henry was a tough guy.

Farr: Henry had a reputation. "Don't get mad, get even." The legislators said, "We're not touching Henry's bill. That's a district's bill. If Henry wants it, we're on Henry's side." (laughs) "We're not listening to anybody else." And Henry was just like, just livid. He said, "Don't you mess around with me and my bill."

So Henry's bill, (I was a coauthor), created the Fort Ord Reuse Authority, now known as FORA. We got the transfers all done, and unfortunately the dream of UC Santa Cruz having a research park in Marina just never matured. I think, frankly, the faculty fought back, thinking, oh, Marina. We're not going to drive down there. That's not an intellectual town. That's not a place where people desire to live and work. They were just being really ivory tower arrogant about it. The idea of a UC research park in Marina just never had any political feet. The desire to have a research park in Marina was top down—Mello and myself—and that was it. Nobody else was buying into it. And to this day, the University is now trying to dump it. I'm trying to stop them, say, "Just hang on. What's the cost of hanging on?" And they say, "Well, we paid all this money." I said, "No, you didn't. You got grants for everything you built and the land was free." UCSC put in some infrastructure, roads, lighting, water mains, and was given some buildings there. There is an MBEST building, which serves a consortium where a lot of entrepreneurial ideas, startups can get started. But it's not

generating enough revenue to pay for it[*self*]. So the University is subsidizing it and they want to dump it.

My feeling is—and I’ve argued this very strongly and I’ve been confirmed by all kinds of studies—that the future of the Monterey Bay economic development is based on its attractiveness for academic training centers. We will be a hot spot for workshops and retreats. We have the brain trusts here to teach anything. We need space to do it. And we’ll actually have researchers who will want to come here to work, but will need space to do some kind of research, just like MBARI [Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute] has done research on the ocean applications for private sector development. David Packard left in trust all that money to run that research center. Things like that, opportunities, will come along because we are a desirable place to live, which attracts great minds. But we’ve got to have affordable real estate amidst all this unaffordable real estate. Research money is very competitive and they can’t afford costly overhead. We’ve got to at least set aside a place that’s surrounded by academia that is affordable to rent or buy. Or lease it from somebody who says, “I’ll build it and you can lease it from me.” We need that opportunity. The minute you sell this land [Fort Ord], it goes into that high-priced land, and the next thing you have to have is some kind of return on that investment that’s real high, and we can’t afford it, and that kills the idea of having affordable opportunities for research.

So the University and I have been at odds about this thing for years. But I still believe—and now CSUMB says, “Well, if they don’t want it, we’d love it.” But they don’t want everything; it’s going to be a struggle for a few years. And now that I’m getting out of the way, maybe somebody will figure out what to do with

it. But I hope they just don't give up that dream because I think a research park is just around the corner when this is going to be the hot place to watch. Watch what happened with the Naval Postgraduate School. Private sector dollars are rushing to try to help that school because that school has got so many great minds in it. I think we're going to have the same thing with CSUMB. And I think when you add up the consortium—we've got UC; CSUMB; the navy here with all their research capabilities; the army here, with all their language capabilities. I mean, we can communicate with any culture in the world. We can teach anybody anything in any language. And we've got all the diversity of flora and fauna and sea life and mountains and agriculture. There is just no doubt in my mind that this is going to be a great, great place to attract creative minds. It always has been. I think the environment is the biggest boost to attracting creative minds, which end up creating things that create jobs.

So just like we need affordable space for the workers, we need an affordable place for minds to settle. I think Fort Ord is doing that and I think in the long run the University would regret giving it all up. So that's the battle of why there's UC property at Fort Ord.

Reti: So originally the military was putting a value on Fort Ord's property?

Farr: When the military closes a base—and its land has never been for sale in the open market—they had acquired it in 1917 and expanded on that until ordered to close and sell, what is fair market value of that land? Actually, the requirement of the federal law is when Department of Defense decides they're going to give up ownership, the department has to offer it to all the defense community, which

is all the military services, and the CIA, and anybody else in that military defense community. And if nobody in that group wants it, then it goes to the other federal agencies, Department of the Interior, and Education, and so on—and they have to have a reason for wanting it, and it has to be authorized by law, and they have to budget a plan to use it. So, in essence, you go through the protocols of saying, “Does anybody else want it?” and since none of them have the ability to say yes, it then goes to the next step. Excess federal land can be given to state and local governments at no cost for specified purposes, such as parks, schools, and fire stations.

After that, and with land value appraisals, it can be sold. So the army did these appraisals and came up with really high prices because the minute Disneyland called, or people with Disneyland-like ideas, wanted to build theme parks there, people wanted to build big condominiums around the bay, like the Florida coastline. Everybody had schemes for doing big development that would cost a lot of money. So the army had a real inflated value of what this real estate [was] worth.

Local governments, if they wanted to control the reuse, would have to buy it, so locals argued that lands here were useless. “It’s got all kinds of endangered species there. You’ve polluted the land. There are toxics under the ground. Much of the base contains unexploded ordnances. You’re on the coastline; you have the Coastal Commission. We have an air board. We have water boards limiting water use. This property can’t even be built on! It’s worthless. (laughs) So just give it to us.”

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So this divide on value went on for about five years. And finally, just as we were about to settle, the Clinton Administration passed a Defense Reauthorization Act on access to military property and said that they should be given—because the Clinton Administration was interested in economic development—should be given to the local reuse authorities for free to stimulate economic development. Local governments would gain tax money to reinvest.

So Fort Ord was right in the middle of the debate to sell or to give free. Finally, the army agreed to a value. They decided bottom line, the local price of 70 million dollars. And the Fort Ord communities were all excited about it because it was a lot lower than the military ever decided, but they had no idea how they were going to raise 70 million dollars just to buy it. The authorizing of transfer at no-cost passed Congress. FORA now got almost all the land free.

The mistake FORA made, I believe, is that local electeds just wanted to get title, with little thought of huge opportunities to create a modern full-service community. I realized, from my service as a county supervisor, that my land use decision role was to decide how land was going to be developed by others. Land use arguments were about government arguing for conditions on private land use, consistent with zoning authorities. It always came to me as somebody owned the land and they wanted to put a shopping center, or housing on it, and it was either a good idea or a bad idea, or you could modify it. I mean, there was give and take.

But, with Fort Ord, the shoe was on the other foot. The public owned the land—the landowner is the local cities. All these cities that border Fort Ord alongside the county of Monterey—we should have gotten an agreement to develop under a master contractor based on solving all the community needs first, like affordable homes, schools, and all kinds of services and businesses that could be here if land costs were cheap. We should have held out for a regional vision, and then let the private sector build it at reduced prices. Land could have been sold cheap for the social benefit of the community.

I think we made several mistakes. One is that FORA should have hired a master developer for the whole property. We should have sat down and decided what the public benefits were that we needed. Number one—we needed workforce housing if we were going to solve our traffic problems around here by trying to cut the commute by having people live closer to their workplace. The developers were on my side on that. They said, “We don’t care. We’re going to win one way or another. If you sell it to us, that cost is passed to the buyer. If you give it to us, we can discount that value.” There’s a provision in law that says you can’t give away public funds or public value, meaning transfer has to be made for “fair market value.” But if you could say to the private developer, “We’ll discount the cost of this land to x value, and that difference between the market value and what we’re discounting it to you has to be passed on below market for affordable housing when it sells. So there is a public benefit. As long as you can show the public benefit is of equal value, you can do this.” I don’t think it had ever been tried on this big a scale, but what the hell, I was willing to try anything because that was my desire to see it all used for the highest and best needs of the

community, not just the private sector. It was public land, not private land. The public could address all their needs on the land they owned and sell the rest.

Reuse of Fort Ord took so long because each city wanted to sell it as fast as possible. It shifted planning and development to the buyer. Projects weren't coordinated. Market forces caused bankruptcy. I think it's going to sort of end up as urban sprawl. I mean, Fort Ord was already built upon. That's the urban footprint that FORA is turning over for commercial and residential development. We did save 17,000 acres for open space, which will be the largest urban park that I know of in the United States.

Reti: Was that the Fort Ord Dunes—^{xxxv}

Farr: Yeah. In part— Well, the Fort Ord Dunes plus the Fort Ord Monument.

I'll talk about the parks, but first want to explain how to get housing sold below market. Builders tell me if you're going to build anything anywhere, there's only five costs that go into any [development]. First, is the cost of land. In California, that's almost your biggest cost. Second, is the cost of labor and materials. And those are pretty fixed. Carpenters and wood are pretty standard prices. Then you have the cost of money—how much did it cost you to borrow this money to do it? Those rates have been pretty low for some time now. So money is cheap. Then you have the cost of permits. Permits are almost, in every case, a local discretion. They're high now because you have school impact fees, transportation fees, and all these other fees that you have to pay. And the fifth thing you have is profit. So if the biggest of those five is the cost of land and you're discounting the land to almost nothing, just think of what you do to the sales price. And those other

things are pretty fixed costs. I mean, frankly, local governments could limit the profit, like in utility law, to 15 percent max, if they wanted. We do that for utilities. And you could figure out a price therein which would bring this so far under market value. We haven't given any taxpayer subsidy; we haven't given them any money. You're not paying them anything. You're just saying, "When you end up building this nice-looking house—and you're going to have to make it look really nice—you're going to sell it or rent it to somebody who is qualified to be low income." The Master Plan calls for workforce housing. By discounting land costs and fees the project comes in at below market value. Everyone wins. And you've done that now by the savings that we've incorporated.

That was my vision. I couldn't get *anybody* on the FORA board to back me up in those days. It's my biggest regret on the reuse of Fort Ord. Because fifteen years later they're caught up in: what are we going to do about the lack of affordable housing for our workforce? Our cities need to adopt and enforce "inclusionary zoning" which preserves opportunities for all income levels to live in every community.

I want to take us back to the days when everybody who worked in a community lived in that community. It didn't matter what your income was, where you worked, you lived. At Fort Ord they're going to create jobs; they're going to build these REI stores, and Target stores, and Best Buy stores, and all those other stores that are out there—Bed Bath and Beyond—shouldn't the workers in those stores—because it was in the master plan—be able to live at Fort Ord? Their salaries they're earning as salespersons should be able to get them a rental or a below market rate home. That was the dream. But nobody put the economics

together to make it possible, so these cities have sold the land to the developers and lost the opportunity to develop wholesome communities.

Reti: And people are just living out in Salinas, or further down the Salinas Valley?

Farr: Yes, I used to go to FORA meetings—I used to go and just poke them in the eye at one time. Because I'd say, "I just walked through your Target store here," (I love that store!) "and I asked everybody where they're from. They all live in Salinas. Some live in Monterey and Seaside. Nobody lives in Marina." I said, "You're not building housing for your workforce. You're not enforcing the goal of the Master Plan to have housing for your workforce. Just do it!"

If you go out to in East Garrison on the southeast corner of the base, which is an incredible development, you will see so much housing going up. I've never seen such a large development in Monterey County. It's fairly attractive housing, the design and the way that the communities are laid out, with sort of alleyways. Ideally, you don't want any cars parked on the streets. The streets can be playgrounds for children and for walking around communities. And they've done that. It's going to be really interesting. But the prices are half a million bucks and that's starting price. So that's not your sales lady at Target. But it was supposed to be. The lack of follow through verges on criminal. And we could have done it. It could have looked exactly the same and yet the prices could have been at workforce salary level. We could have said okay, "You have to be prequalified going through the Housing Authority. And we want to give

preference to people who are already living here.” I think somebody told me that most of the buys are from people out of the area.

And the other side of it is you want to attract businesses at workforce salary levels. And this is what Seaside and Marina never got because they thought all you have to do is have a well-educated workforce. I said, “No, what these places need is workers to live near their workplaces. Because they don’t want to have to give the benefits of time and travel, time lost in traffic jams.” But now most benefits also include some transportation benefit. A lot of companies now, and in some communities they require it; you have to pay the impact for parking. You have to give employees either a place to park, or a parking allowance, or a stipend on their paycheck for taking [public transportation], a commuter benefit.

Now for the parks. Of all the things I’ve done at Fort Ord, the parks, and university, and vet clinic are my favorites. The State Dunes Park is the largest shoreline park on the coast, four miles long. We also got, in another area, housing for the employees of the State Park system. Those have to be built by a developer at their cost. We’ve got an elder hostel being built. There are a lot of little subtle benefits to come out of Fort Ord. And we’ve got all the backcountry preserved forever and ever in federal wilderness status called Monument Status. All the development out there is going to have to incorporate more open space and more parks, and mini parks in neighborhoods. So I’m satisfied that we came out of the reuse with a good balance between development and open space. But I’m just not satisfied that we came up with the best economic solutions for livability.

Reti: Why do you think that dream wasn't realized?

Farr: That's a good question. I think it's for two reasons. First of all, what I failed to realize is that not everybody thinks about the public good. Private developers put a lot of pressure on electeds who haven't been educated on all the options available to them on the public side. City managers should be leading that discussion. I just think everybody thinks like I do.

Reti: (laughs) Don't we all.

Farr: I've had a different education in practicality, or learning through experience (laughs), or in some cases bad judgment. But in local government, where all of your land decisions are made, not by state government or federal government, your role on a city council or on a board of supervisors is to listen to private ideas. Somebody else owns the land and they're coming to you to get approval for what they want to do. So you're listening to all these development ideas and you're commenting on whether development is proper at all. Is it consistent with zoning and stuff? But even then, you're just tweaking their proposal. So, you're sort of dealing with window dressing the proposal. So I think that was failed vision or responsibility. If you ask me who should have had that responsibility, it should have been the city managers. They should have had a workshop for the councils saying, "We're in a different place now. We own the land. Why don't we sit down and decide what we the community need, in terms of public benefits, and then we go out to developers and say, 'If you'd like to develop on our land meeting these criteria, where the public really is the winner—"

Reti: Right. And where that process is driving the vision, rather than the developers coming in with ideas and saying yay or nay, or, "Let's tweak it."

Farr: Yeah. Now, where have we done that? There is a model at Fort Ord, done by the army that really was successful but it didn't get much attention. The military didn't totally abandon Fort Ord; they downsized it and they kept some real estate for development for housing for their troops at the Defense Language Institute, etc. The real estate they kept was set up for housing that was modern, not the old, rundown barracks. The navy and the army held onto their residential lands. And in the meantime, in Washington, D.C., I sat on the committee and worked with Congressman Hobson to create what they call the Residential Community Initiative, RCI. [In the past the] army would go to the Corps of Engineers and say, "Design us a bunch of houses based on rank of the military. So build us little small housing for the enlisted and build us better housing for the officers," not thinking whether these are families, how many kids, or people with disabilities, or anything. That was the old formula of building military housing. And the way the law works, if the military family lives there, then they get a base housing allowance to pay for the rent. Or they get the base housing allowance anyway, and they go live off base in a residential community in Carmel, where the schools are better.

So what was happening at Fort Ord was nobody wanted to live there, when the rentals were available in Carmel or Monterey, and you could go to the Monterey Unified School District or the Carmel Unified School District. If you had kids you would say, "I'm not going to live in Fort Ord." And you'd ask the military families why they left the base and they'd say, "Well, these houses are old.

They're not up to code. They're awkward for us. The rooms are too small. They're not accessible and we have a kid with disabilities. We're not going to live there, when we can live off base."

So what we did in Congress is we said, "Military, stop. Stop. You don't know how to build houses. Why don't we turn it over to the private sector and say we'll lease the land to them for fifty years. They only get the base housing allowance of rent. You get just what the military people get. But you're going to have to build us houses they want to live in. So go out and assess what the private sector has out there, look at the communities, come up with an architectural idea that fits the community." Here in this area, it's the Spanish architectural vision. "But think about what it is that's going to attract people to live here because they're going to have this option to walk up into this military house and live here, or just take their [subsidy] and go live somewhere else. So make it better than anyplace else. And you're going to collect the rent on it and we're going to electronically put that into your account every month. You don't have to deal with tenant management and stuff like that."

Reti: That's a good deal.

Farr: "If the soldier or family goofs off, you can call the commanding general and he'll take care of the goofing off. Private sector, take a look at the economics. Come bid on the project. We lease the land for one dollar a year." New houses, new neighborhoods. That's what we want.

And Clark Construction out of Washington, which is building every single skyscraper in Washington—a big, huge, huge—the biggest developer I've ever

seen. They partnered up with a management company called Pinnacle in Virginia, and they put in a bid to build and operate all new military housing at Ford Ord and won it. They went out and borrowed almost a billion dollars, nine hundred million dollars in one night on Wall Street. It's all private development. They don't have to go for voter approval or anything. This is what they do.

The producer for designing houses was based on community input. Clark-Pinnacle came out and they did all these surveys. They went around the region and did these slideshows of architectural designs. They met with the communities. Everybody just loved what they were doing because they were going to build to the community standards. For existing buildings, including new schools, and some of it was built in the 1980s—the windows weren't code, the fire wasn't code, nothing. So they couldn't even get people in these houses without rehabilitation. They went back and retrofitted them all at great expense. And this had to be done on the public dime. Whereas all the new housing for the military families is some of the most beautiful housing in America. And nobody has complained about it. Everybody has oohed and aahed. And I told the members of FORA, "That's what I mean about affordable workforce housing." And guess what? Not a dime of public money was spent to build that housing. If the army can do it, why not us? If you have the will, there's a way.

In addition, the army has a de facto rent control on that housing. The government decides how much they're going to pay. But they decided this was a good business deal. Because they get it for fifty years. Now, I asked them, "How can you make this deal work? All of this RCI Housing at Fort Ord is forever affordable. Why?" They said, "Because we didn't have to buy the land." The land

title was still in military ownership. “And we’re not selling the houses. We’re just leasing them at fixed rates.”

So we’ve got continuous low rent. Unless you abandon the mission of the Naval Postgraduate School (that’s another issue) and the Defense Language Institute—Clark/Pinnacle has a guarantee of about 2500 homes and they decided, the military is shrinking and people, even though we have this great housing, are still wanting to live in a different school district. So we’ll never be able to make it financially if we build out to 4000 homes. So they left some of the old duplexes, and retrofitted them and brought them up to code. Clark/Pinnacle also won the bid to retrofit the entire navy housing—a village right next door to the Monterey Court house [where this interview session was taking place]—that’s the navy’s property right there.

Reti: What property?

Farr: Mesa Village, next door to the navy property. Did you see the sign saying, “Space available”? They’re going to the private sector to rent, if navy families want to live in the civilian community.

Reti: Oh, I didn’t realize that.

Farr: So we are having an unintended benefit for the private sector to be able to take action on “affordable housing.” But the thing is that these properties had a master developer and we had a master agreement. And it was all about affordability for enlisted military personnel and officers. And I’ve seen it in action. When they first built them and they started showing the new military

arrivals—the soldier, sailor, or marine here for anywhere from six months to two years, or if they are a military officer, the assignment may be longer, four years—but enlisted, particularly the low-income people that come in there, you see the families just burst into tears. (choked up) “I never dreamed I could live in a house this beautiful.” By the way, they ask them, “What color curtains do you want? What kind of carpeting do you want?” They let them make the choice.

Reti: Wow, that’s really great.

Farr: Yeah, it’s really great. It’s a wonderful program. And I’m just so proud that Fort Ord was one of the first in the nation to do it.

Reti: Okay, we’ve got to stop, Sam, for today.

Farr: Okay.

Reti: For today. I’m sorry. [the office Farr and Reti was using was closing for the night.]

Arriving in the United States Congress

Reti: Okay, so today is August 26, 2016. This is Irene Reti. I’m here with Congressman Sam Farr again, for our fifth interview. Today I wanted to talk about your first years in Congress. I know you came into the House in 1993. It’s a very interesting time that you came because it was sort of the last, in my mind, the last gasp of Democrats controlling the House for a long while—

Farr: Exactly.

Reti: So I want to know what it was like when you got there. There were a couple of things that happened when you first got there that I tracked in my research: the Defense of Marriage Act and NAFTA. And then we have the rise of Newt Gingrich and the Republican Revolution.

Farr: The Contract for America. Yeah, I think that 1993 was very interesting. The new Congress that came in with Clinton had been sworn in in January, so because of the special election I was about six months late. You know, I'm the new kid in the class, where they've all formed their class, elected their class officers, gone through extensive freshmen training, orientation. I get none of that. It's just—had I not had thirteen years of experience in the California State Legislature, I probably would have been overwhelmed. (laughs) But I figured it was just learning how to get around, which is the most difficult part of getting into a new Congress. You have all these meetings and businesses in different buildings. And you go underground, above ground, inside, outside, up and down. (laughs) How do you do this—which building and which room and which floor? I had to have a staff member, one of Leon's former staffers—he left a skeletal office staff there that he didn't take to OMB (Office of Management and Budget) and so I inherited that—and they helped me just sort of get around. But it was quite a shock as to how much walking one had to do to cover the U.S. Capitol Complex.

The day I got sworn-in we were having another base closure round—we'd already lost the last one with Fort Ord—and now the BRAC Commission was conducting a hearing on the new round, DLI [Defense Language Institute] and Fort Hunter Liggett were on the list. So my staff said, "You've got to go over and

testify in front of the BRAC Commission, which was being chaired by a retired congresswoman from Maryland. And I run over to the Senate side, I don't know where I am, in one of those Senate office buildings. The staff took me over there. I wait my turn to speak and get up and I'm reading my testimony. And these bells are going off. I don't know what that means. Finally, the chairwoman interrupted me and she said, "Congressman Farr? I understand this is your first day in the House of Representatives and you were just sworn in." I said, "Just this morning, Madam Chair." And she said, "Well, congratulations because you've just missed your first vote in Congress." (laughs)

Reti: Oh, no! That's what the bells meant?

Farr: Yeah, and I didn't know it. You know, nobody ever wants to miss a vote. So I was like, oh, my God. This is how I'm starting? It was quite an experience, the confusion that confronts you when you first get there and don't know your way around. It happens to everybody.

But anyway, Bill Clinton was the new president, very progressive and wanting to get a lot of stuff done. What shocked me—it was very interesting—what shocked me was that in the California Legislature, before getting sworn into Congress—this was a few months [earlier] when Pete Wilson was governor of California, he had to come and make a state of the state address to a joint session of the assembly and the state senate I talked about that earlier. It was a session. That was the first time Governor Wilson made a statement because he'd just gotten elected, he said, "We're going to handle the California state debt," which was I think about 14 billion dollars—it might have been half that, 7 billion, but

whatever it was—his statement, which was really interesting and kind of surprising as a conservative Republican governor—he said, “I would like to work with the legislature on this debt that we have. I will promise that we’ll meet you’ll halfway. We’ll raise half of it in new taxes and fees, if you will cut the government by an equal amount. So you Democrats that like to spend, you’re responsible for the cutting. And we Republicans who don’t like to tax, will be responsible for taxing.”

What they ended up with was about twenty-eight different ways of increasing revenues, with little taxes here and there, and fees and so on. The cuts were sort of all-around, too. That all came up as one package and we voted on it and it passed before I ran off to Congress. I think it had to have a two-thirds vote. Republicans were reluctant. They booed the governor when he made the suggestion. It was probably the beginning of the end of Pete Wilson’s moderate governorship. He had to move far to the Right after that because the party, the state party was moving that direction.

Then I got a shock in Congress when the Democratic majority under President Clinton was trying to do the same thing: close the budget by raising some taxes. And one of the taxes that would have been very popular to raise in California, [but was] very unpopular in Washington, was a carbon tax, essentially taxing oil products, petroleum products. I never realized— I mean, California is a big oil-producing state. But we don’t live on oil. It isn’t what we think about when we go to Sacramento. But the guys from Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, that’s why they’re there, to protect those oil interests. And these are all Democrats. And God, the criticism the old-time Democrats in the House made of Clinton: “This

whippersnapper. He's been a governor. He's never been in Congress. He doesn't know what he's talking about. How dare he challenge them and suggest taxes?" I mean, these are Democrats talking! And I got up in front of my colleagues in the Democratic Caucus. We had a morning caucus and President Clinton came. And we had our caucus actually that day on the floor of the House of Representatives behind closed doors. It was shut down because we're not doing official business, so we used it as a general meeting room. We had a huge number of Democrats—we were the majority of the Congress.

And Clinton lays out his ideas of why he wants [taxes] and the other things he was going to do. And I got up and I said, "You know, I'm brand new. I'm the newest kid on the block, Mr. President. I've never been here. And I've never spoken in front of Congress. But let me just tell you, I left California just a few weeks ago and we, with bipartisan support, voted on, I think, twenty-seven different measures of taxation. Democrats did this. And we got some Republican help." I said, "I think your proposal is so minimal. I don't know why we can't all support it," having no idea that all these old-timers sitting behind me were like, "Who the hell is this kid? What's he saying? He's talking—we don't like newcomers talking like that." They rib you and stuff as a freshman.

But the White House thanked me profusely me for getting up and doing that. My staff came in and said, "You know, the White House doesn't usually call and thank somebody for just a sort of general statement in a caucus meeting, but you took on the special oil interest old timers and [talked about] votes that had been taken in California."

Reti: So you were off to quite a start.

Farr: Well, I was shocked, mainly because I was learning, oh, my God, this party—these are these Southern Dixiecrats, or whatever we want to call them. They're more conservative than the moderate Republicans in California. So it was quite a shock to see the criticism and opposition to our own party's leader, our president, came more from Democrats than Republicans, who would always oppose him. But I didn't expect to see our own party members opposing him.

That ended up being the Clinton budget package, when the Democrats finally worked out the compromises—and they knocked out the carbon tax, unfortunately—but the compromise was essentially an increase in other taxes. And that's what led balancing the federal budget for three years in a row, where we actually had surpluses. Now, we didn't wipe out the long-term debt, but we at least, year-by-year, where we traditionally always spend more than we take in, which adds up to the long-term debt. But for three years, and the only ones in recent history, the budget actually had more money taken in than was spent out. Clinton left Washington with a budget surplus, all starting with that vote.

So he was really providing some fiscal leadership. There was no unrest. Yeah, people grumbled about taxes going up, but there was no real dissension. You didn't hear about it. People were paying it and even in California they were paying it.

So this whole idea that everybody hates taxes and you can't get re-elected if you vote for them, I think, has been proven wrong over and over again, both at the state level and at the federal level. And that was a controversial vote, passing

that budget, because it was at the end of the year but it never got a Republican vote at all. All the Democrats had to do it.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

NAFTA was the same thing. When I ran and it was very controversial in the campaign for me, personally and politically, because I had said wasn't going to support NAFTA. But I always conditioned that on: "based on what happens with the Montreal protocols." In those days, environmental issues weren't negotiated in the trade agreement itself. They were negotiated as a sidebar negotiation. And so were the labor standards. It wasn't until Nancy Pelosi became Speaker—because the Democrats always said, "We want labor standards and environmental (and there are international labor standards and international environmental standards), we want those to be in the trade agreement itself, not sidebars that you may or may not pay attention to."

So anyway, I indicated that if NAFTA had worked out the sidebars for labor and environment, and it was up to those communities to tell me whether they liked them—but it was a real tough vote. Because I thought during my campaign, no, I'm not going to vote for this NAFTA deal.

And two things happened. First, and it's very interesting because you never know what's going to persuade you to go from no to yes, or yes to no. I was watching the debate between Al Gore and Ross Perot, and Ross Perot being so derogatory about Mexico and Mexican people. I was a Peace Corps volunteer. I had lived in Latin America. One thing that struck me—and I saw it in Medellín, Colombia—is that if people had a choice in the supermarket, or in a clothing

store, and were looking at labels, if that item had a U.S.A. label on it, even though it was more expensive, they'd buy it. The irony is that the Arrow shirts (they had an Arrow Shirt factory in Medellín), if there were shirts looking exactly alike, made out of the same material, some made in Medellín, made in Colombia, right next to an Arrow shirt made in the USA—they would take the one made in the U.S.A. So the USA brand is incredibly effective and strong, and our best tool in marketing because people think we do it better and we do it cleaner and wiser and everything like that.

So to hear Ross Perot sort of talk about Mexico being a Third World country just ticked me off. Just personally. I was getting really angry. I said, that's racism. So I was saying, you know, if this is the argument against NAFTA, they're wrong. Mexican people are going to buy American products and by the way, it's our border. And when I was in the California Legislature we had huge border problems because Tijuana is a multi-million population city and their sewage treatment plants are all archaic. And here we were in the California Legislature, debating whether we ought to spend money to help the city of Tijuana, across the border in another country, fix their sewer system because the sewer outfall came right down on the border, where the tides moved all that sewage into San Diego beaches and everything. So we can sit there and complain, but why don't we be part of the solution rather than just being derogatory and negative. That would require that we pass a statewide bond issue and put some of that money into helping the infrastructure of Tijuana. We discussed that and I think we actually did it.

NAFTA was like, no, we'll never do those things. We're going to build this border—it's sort of the fence again that Trump is arguing about today. That really ticked me off.

The second thing—my father called me one night and he said, "Sam, this NAFTA vote is getting really down to the wire. Are you going to let down our president of the United States, if he calls you and asks you?" I said, "Well, Dad, I don't want to be the swing vote. I don't want to be the determining vote on it. But I'm starting to move that way." And he said, "Well, I just want to leave you with—I know you really respect this president. He's doing a great job." My father had been in politics. I had great respect for him. And he said, "Sometimes you just have to compromise. I think it would probably be not in the best interests of the United States, much less California, where our biggest trade partner is Mexico, to let it down."

Now, what was going on on the district level was labor unions were totally against it and they were going to hang you if you supported it. And I don't think I've ever said this publicly, but when the president did call me I said, "Mr. President, I've got some issues in my district because I've been trying to get done." I mean, if there was a community that was affected by plant closures and jobs moving to Mexico, moving out of my district, look at Watsonville, California.

Several big businesses had moved out before NAFTA, so NAFTA wasn't really the cause of it. People looking back might think it is. But if they look at the actual timing, it wasn't. But you had a lot of these people in Watsonville totally

unemployed when Jolly Green Giant left. And my point was there were tools in the federal toolbox, for example declaring Watsonville an enterprise zone, which meant that all the taxes raised in that zone could stay in that zone, and you could have less fees. I mean, it was essentially a tool for encouraging investment within a zone. You waived a lot of other stuff. So if developers were trying to look, or manufacturers were saying, "Where should we put our next plant? Let's do it inside Watsonville. Let's take over all these abandoned—" And that was a tool that I wanted the president to understand and accept. The other thing was that we wanted some loans, low-interest rate loans, for all these families that were distressed. And we got that. Also, I wanted the Cal State Monterey Bay land transferred to the university. We got that. We got a lot of things that I wanted out of that conversation with the president.

I remember another conversation when the president called me. I was a new freshman member of Congress and it's always a thrill. And he said, "Well, I want you to come down to my office." And my staff said, "You know, what you do is you go down to the [Oval] office and all the national press is sitting outside there watching who's walking in and out the door." (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: "And you sit down and sort of get beat up by the president of the United States and walk out of the door with a smile on your face, announcing that you're going to support the president. That doesn't—people don't accept that back home. So if you go down there, go down there at night when there's nobody around." (laughs) That's what my staff was telling me.

Reti: (laughing)

Farr: Well, anyway—so the president calls me and I told him, ironically, “Mr. President, I can’t come down and see you right now.” He said, “Well, I need to talk to you about this vote.” I said, “I don’t think you’ll have to worry about how I’m going to vote. I’ve been making up my mind and I’m almost there. But the reason I can’t see you is I just pulled my back out. I can’t even get out of the chair I’m sitting in. I’m in so much pain.” “Oh, Sam,” he says, “Look, here’s what you do. I had that same problem. I was reaching for keys in my car one day and I threw my back out. My back’s in horrible shape. I’ve got to always do exercises every morning. Why don’t you come down to the White House? I’ll show you this exercise routine.” He goes into the details of the exercise you have to do.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I said, “Mr. President, I thought you were calling about the big trade agreement.” (laughs) He said, “Oh, yeah, but that’s not important. Your back is really important.” I thought, oh, how—this is sort of Clinton. He’s so good at—and it was sincere. He would have accepted it if I had said, “I’m not with you.” He would still have given me that advice. But I got off the phone and kind of laughed.

But that evolved into a very controversial vote for NAFTA. And what the Republicans did, which parties will always do—they were obviously in favor of trade, but they weren’t going to put up a single vote until every Democrat had been milked to vote for it. And the president, he’s not going to let the Republicans defeat it, so he can’t accept that they might vote for it. So he has to

get those votes, 218 votes, out of his own Democratic caucus. And it was very interesting, because the word was that no Republicans were going to vote for it. I thought, God, they're so pro-trade. How are they going to tell all their business groups that they're not voting for it? So the minute it got to 218, all these Republicans piled on. I think it passed with like 253 votes, or something like that. But all the difference between 218 and 253, who was all Republicans, who added on.

But anyway, the Democrats will say, maybe you didn't need to vote for it. But that's just all hindsight. These are tough decisions you have to make. Obviously just the opposite was true with Obama's Healthcare Act. There was never a Republican vote for that. I think there was a Hawaiian Republican, an Asian guy who was elected in the special election, and he lost the primary, so he was going to serve in Congress for about eight months or something and not have a chance to return. He didn't like the way the Republicans were beating up on minorities, so he finally said, "I got nothing to lose. I'll vote with the Democrats on this."

Reti: Well, we'll get into the issue of Obamacare much more later.

Farr: And right after NAFTA, the *New York Times* published an article which said, I think, "The most vulnerable victim of the NAFTA vote will probably be Congressman Farr. He'll probably lose in the next election." Labor stayed out, but I still got elected in a very narrow margin.

Defense of Marriage Act

Reti: Okay. Now tell me about the Defense of Marriage Act. On that one, you were one of, I think, 15 percent of Democrats who voted against it. Is that right?

Farr: Well, there were, I think, sixty-seven votes, or something like that. I remember looking up at the vote and thinking, God, is that all?

What led up to the Defense of Marriage Act was that the state of Hawaii, through their state courts, was reviewing a lawsuit where a gay couple had challenged state law, saying that the interpretation of state law was that they could marry; there was no ban on gay marriage. It was an interpretation of the law and the appellate court, I think, had upheld the marriage. And so, the question was going to the Hawaiian Supreme Court. And the Republicans, the conservatives, were worried that that's a pretty liberal court and they were going to uphold it.

Now we have certain laws like marriage and divorce and death, that have reciprocity. That is, if you are married in California, your marriage is valid anywhere in the United States. If you have a death certificate from California, it's valid anywhere in the United States. So even though the certificates themselves—the marriage certificates, death certificates, birth certificates—are all state-issued, because we have no federal—this is one country that doesn't have any federal—in most countries those documents are national documents.

Reti: I didn't realize that.

Farr: Yeah. So that's what got into this gay marriage, is all these different states and what they were going to do. So the Defense of Marriage Act was by the

conservative Republicans who just really couldn't stand the idea that gay couples could have legal status. They introduced legislation saying that if a state does recognize gay marriage, it doesn't have to be recognized in any other state. They named it the Defense of Marriage Act, which was really an anti-marriage act, right?

So this vote comes up, I think, in October, when you have elections in November, or right around that time. And on the floor it had been hugely debated and very controversial. There weren't a lot of progressive congressional districts that essentially would allow their legislator to vote for gay marriage. Nobody knew for sure. I think the general sentiment was for a lot of these Democrats to err on the side of caution, and for them, caution meant to vote for the bill.

And I remember some of my most liberal friends, like [Congressmember] Nita Lowey, I remember because as we voted we were standing next to each other and I said, "How are you going to vote?" She said, "I can't. I've got a tough election." I said, "Nita, you can do this." You don't have a lot of discussions on these bills, just a couple of words like that. It's sort of like: what are you going to order for dinner? Well, I don't know—

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And I said, "I don't know. In my conscience, I could never vote for this bill. I don't care if it costs me my election. Fortunately, I have a gay mayor in my district, John Laird, and I think my district will support me."^{xxxvi} But I wasn't sure. I just knew in my heart of hearts that this is the right thing to do. I've got to oppose this.

So I voted no. And when I looked at the vote, I think there were only sixty-seven of us. I thought, wow, that's so few. We have a lot of progressive Democrats that voted for this bill, that shouldn't have voted for it. It passed overwhelmingly, and unfortunately—which nobody mentions—President Clinton signed it. He was president of the United States. I don't think he mentions that very often, but he made some bad decisions to sign bills. That and the Helms-Burton Act putting all the restrictive embargos on Cuba, putting them into statutory law. We haven't been able to repeal that, despite the opening up of relations administratively with Cuba.

So it was interesting because we had the elections and we were back the next year. And I remember asking Nita. I said, "Well, how was your election? Did you have a tough election?" She said, "No, I actually won pretty—" I said, "Well, how did the Defense of Marriage Act vote come up in your campaign?" She said, "No one ever brought it up. I wish I'd followed you, Sam. In my opinion, that's the worst vote I've ever cast in Congress."

So the story, if there is meaning here, is that not every vote has consequences, and yet every vote has some consequence. Because where it was no consequence for her—it was a bad vote but fortunately it didn't hurt her—it didn't help or hurt her because nobody brought it up. For me, it was an incredibly good vote, and I didn't know how good until I got home that weekend. That weekend we had the Gay Pride dinner. I got here late from my travel from Washington. It was at the Hyatt in Monterey. I remember walking in really late. I didn't have a speaking role. I was relieved that I didn't have to speak, as I was so tired. But because I was the top-ranking elected official in the room, and just after I got

there and they were going around introducing all the elected officials, they introduced me and mentioned my vote. I got a long, standing ovation. I thought, I'm damned proud that I did this the right way.

Reti: I'm glad you did, too.

Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Terrorists

Farr: I'm glad. And I've never doubted my votes on military funding. I try to tell people, and I've got some other stories to tell, like I wasn't there for the vote right after 9/11 because I came home for my daughter's wedding. I remember Barbara Lee was the only person who voted against it.^{xxxvii} And the city of Santa Cruz wanted to give her the key to the city for the courageous vote of being the only vote against the resolution. It wasn't the resolution that entered into the Iraq War. It was just the resolution condemning the actions.^{xxxviii} And people in Santa Cruz said, "Well, why didn't you vote like Barbara Lee?" I was introducing her at the city event and some people in the audience said, "Well, why didn't you do it?" "Yeah, why didn't you do it?" A lot of yelling.

So I just told them. I said, "You know what? I'll tell you why I didn't do it. Because I wasn't there." And then you hear all this: "Boo, boo." I said, "I wasn't there because I came home for my daughter's wedding four days after the attack. It was really hard getting home. But I promised my daughter when she told me she was going to get married on September 15, a year before, I said, 'Well, Jessica, Congress is in session that time of the year.'" She said, "Dad, you're not going to miss my *wedding*, are you? You missed so much when you were in the

Assembly.” I said, “Jessica—“ I just kind of laughed. I said, “Jessica, I won’t miss your wedding if a Third World War starts.”

Reti: (gasps)

Farr: So I had made that commitment that I’d be there. And then for a day after [9/11] a lot of talk, “Should we cancel the wedding?” and everybody said, “No, we need something like this, positive.”

So I said to the audience, “This is why I wasn’t there. I had to be there to walk my daughter down the aisle. It was really hard to get there and be there on time. But you know what? If you think that I should been there [to cast a] vote—and regardless of how I voted it wouldn’t have made a difference—if you think I should have stayed for that vote and missed my daughter’s wedding, then don’t vote for me next election. But if you think I made the right choice, I’d really like to have your support once again.”

After booing me, they gave me a standing ovation. The point of that story is that I tell my colleagues who worry over family demands and a floor vote that if they’re criticizing your vote and it’s a controversial vote, it’s more than just an intellectual decision because you’ve got friends and even contributors on both sides of the issue. So it really comes down to—I mean every controversial vote is different—but it gets down, I think, to sort of a gut, and a basic—what your own moral compass is telling you, if you have one, and it’s strong. I tell people, “If you vote your guts, not your brain, because your brain will try to figure it out politically and be probably wrong—like the Defense of Marriage Act, which was Nita’s brain working against my heart—and you tell people what your emotions

tell you, they may not like it, but they'll accept your reasons for casting that vote."

So emotions and passions trump all kinds of campaign contributions, lobbying, facts, charts. Very rarely are you put in a situation where that emotion is called upon, to cast your vote, which in rare cases could be a deciding vote. Then it truly is a profile in courage for some people to do it. I've had friends who've cast tough votes and lost their elections for it. The crime bill [during the Clinton Administration] had a ban on assault weapons and a lot of the Democrats from the Southern states were convinced to vote for it and they lost their elections. That's when Newt Gingrich took over the House [with a Republican majority], for the first time in modern history, in 1994. and I almost lost my seat. It was the closest election I ever ran—

Reti: Oh, I didn't realize that.

Farr: Yeah, it was just not a year for Democrats. Clinton, as a new president, shocked the nation by coming in and wanting to do so much right away, and Congress wasn't ready for it. A lot of progressive ideas, just one after another. In fact, he probably had too many ideas. (chuckles) One of the things that I think Leon Panetta once said as chief of staff, "We have to slow him down. We can't handle more than one good idea a month." Because every idea you have, you have to then go out and market it for grassroots support. You can't have a new idea every week, or almost every day of every week, (laughs) and Clinton did.

Hillary Clinton's Health Care Plan

Reti: Well, let me just interject here—because I think this happened before Gingrich and the Republican Revolution—Hillary Clinton's Health Care plan—was that in 1993?

Farr: Yeah, well Hillary Clinton did it because she was interested in the subject matter. Republicans were trying to attack the Democrats and the Democrats attack the Republicans, no matter what. I mean, that's just the nature of the beast. The opposition party to the president is going to just try to attack.

It hasn't been as bad as it is now. It hasn't been that the opposition party actually said, "No matter what you want to do, we're not going to help you," which is what the Republicans said about President Barack Obama. Mitch McConnell said, "I don't care what it is. Even if you take our ideas, we're not going to help you implement them because we don't want you to be successful on anything, even if you are successful with our ideas." Which is just so contrary to good governance. I mean, what people want to do is elect a government to fix problems. They don't care what the partisan battles are. That's in-house politics. They want you to have results. And when you just sort of ban results, or block results that are necessary to keep the country stable, oh, I get so angry with that. That's the time you want to throw the bums out. But you got to know which bum. You don't throw them all out, because some of them have been on your side.

But Hillary really took it on and brought all the experts in the country to the White House. I think she was really well intentioned. This is so controversial, to

throw out an idea that we've got to reform health care. Everybody has a different reason for where the problem is in health care. It's different for a senior citizen than it is for a newborn, or a prenatal kid. It's different for people who have pre-existing conditions than it is for people who have smoking and alcohol addictions. And it's different for what you pay doctors in one state, versus what you pay doctors in another state. So there are just tons of issues in health care. And what she was trying to do is bring them all to the table, and figure out a solution, and then go to Congress and present a bill that really had a lot of suggestions on how to fix it.

Now remember, the Republicans weren't going to give this brand-new president this gift of solving this health care crisis. So they attacked Hillary vigorously and personally, and suggested that her meetings violated ethical standards, using the White House and having people come in, and those meetings weren't recorded, and they weren't—

Reti: Meetings that would be discussing this issue—

Farr: Yeah! I mean, it was essentially a task force. It was a committee, bringing in all these smart people and saying, "Well, what do you think we ought to do?" I mean, when we can't even do that now, God forbid how government is going to be able to get advice on any issue.

The GOP filed lawsuits, and did all kinds of things to attack the process, not the language, and essentially gummed up the discussion. They said the White House violated all kinds of rules and therefore the product isn't even worth discussing. I remember Bob Dole getting up on the floor of the Senate and using the subway

maps of Washington and saying, “If you chart out the Hillary Clinton healthcare plan, this is what it looks like.” With all these red, orange, and green lines on it, which are the subway colors in Washington. (laughs) It was a very clever kind of symbolism to get his point across, but that’s not what the bill did.

Anyway, that’s why health care reform was so bold. Nobody has been able to come up with a comprehensive solution, until Nancy Pelosi got elected Speaker and made it her priority, along with Barack Obama, to finish the work on health care delivery. The Obama White House learned from the Clinton White House, which decided to bring the answer in detail to Congress. Clinton brought the complete drafted bill solution to Congress. Barack didn’t do that. He just said, “Let Congress figure out the details. We’ve got a problem and as president I’m going to work with Congress to solve the problem.”

And we drafted a bill that had a lot of Hillary’s suggestions in it. But because we couldn’t get the votes, we just couldn’t do all the things that we wanted to do to really solve the problem. And that’s why the health care plan is still having some difficulties.

Newt Gingrich and the Republican Revolution

Reti: Mm, hmm. So then we get into the 1994 election and Newt Gingrich. So how did things change at that point?

Farr: The election of 1994 was historical. Democrats lost the majority for the first time in decades. My Democratic colleagues got wiped out. I don’t know how

many seats we lost—eighty, ninety, maybe a hundred seats almost. The Democrats had been in power so long, they just couldn't believe it happened.

Reti: It had been what, fifty years?

Farr: Yeah. The Democrats had always been a majority and were always in leadership jobs and always trying to solve problems. What happened after the Republicans took over, was we just kept debating on how to solve problems. Although in the minority, we never stopped. Our leaders kept saying, "We're the minority party now. Our ideas don't count. We're not the problem solvers. We're just the reactors." Nobody could accept our new role. We were still being legislators, every one of us.

Reti: And you'd only been there a year—

Farr: Yeah, but remember, I had also been in the State Assembly for thirteen years. And I had been in a very progressive and a very sophisticated state legislature. And I had been very active at the local government level. So I had a lot of experience in legislating. But I was just shocked at how the Republicans just cut out—I just never believed, because when I was in Sacramento, when Republicans—they were never in the majority when I was there—but when they introduced bills, we'd give them a fair hearing. Republican bills in Sacramento got passed. But in Washington we heard, "We're not going to hear any Democrats' bills." But to run with this brand-new, sort of, as Newt Gingrich would say, "Fresh Air Republicans"—we're going to have a plan for America, a very regressive plan called Contract for America—the contract that essentially,

we've met the enemy and it's us, the government. We're going to contract with the American people to really cut, squeeze, and trim the federal government.

Of course, you know what they're cutting and squeezing and trimming, is all the social programs, welfare programs, environmental programs, safety programs, OSHA standards, things like that. And they had the votes to do it. Fortunately, we had Clinton as president, so those bills never got very far.

I mean, looking back on it, I think what I respected about Gingrich, is that even though his philosophy was very conservative, he was a policy wonk about problems. I mean, he knew that these problems existed. And what he would try to do—he'd be interested in solving them—he just might have an extreme conservative viewpoint about how to solve them. But he didn't deny that they were problems.

An example of that is his interest in helping Washington, D.C. to be a great capitol city. Remember that Congress can veto the budget of the city council of Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. is not a state. It's a district. And even though they have a duly elected mayor, and a city council, and they run themselves like a normal city—and they're a big city with a big budget—everything they do has to be approved by Congress. We're like the mother and father of Washington, D.C. And we are always nitpicking: you cannot hire gay people to be in your fire department; you cannot recognize gay marriage; even though you passed a local ordinance on use of marijuana, it cannot be implemented. We just nitpick away, and that's why there's such a huge fight inside the city of Washington, D.C. They have a representative, as a district, as Guam does, and Puerto Rico, and the

Virgin Islands and so on. Eleanor Holmes Norton has been the congresswoman delegate from the district. But you'll see on all the district license plate covers: "Taxation without representation." Because those delegates aren't allowed to vote on the floor. They can be on the floor. They are paid like a congressman. They have an office, like a congressman. They're treated like a congressman. There's nothing different. Except when we go to the floor on the final decisions, they're not allowed to vote. They can be there but they can't put their card in the voting machines. There's no name for them up on the roll call. So essentially, they're not allowed to be counted.

So Washington, D.C. says: "You guys are using all our taxes and vetoing all of our local decisions. We want to have a voice in the process." I think this is going to go on for years. Many people think they ought to just be their own state. But if they were, they'd have several members of Congress, because it's a big city, maybe two. And certainly, they'd be entitled to two senators. And they'd all be Democrats. So I don't think the Republicans are going (laughs) to let that happen.

But back to Newt. He realized that there were problems with the infrastructure of the city. And I remember one day on the floor, he took the time as he was presiding to use his authority to stop the proceedings, and give a speech on how Congress needed to invest in the city to make it the best capital city in the world. It was a really well-thought out speech, and I congratulated him on it, on how important Washington, D.C. is to the image of the world and certainly as the capitol of the United States of America, and that we, as congressmen, as its

caretakers ought to do a lot better job of caretaking it. I thought, this is great. I'm glad the leadership of Congress is getting away from this nitpicking.

But then nothing happened. His lack of follow-through was tragic because the Republicans had the power to invest, but couldn't get past petty issues. We should have earmarked a pot of money that goes to them and they could use it. But the need for having that independence, he was very articulate on it, and I think it's as true today as it was when he said that a long time ago. We can make our nation's capital city the best in the world, but it takes a committed Congress to do it.

So Newt was, I think interesting, in that he was a policy wonk guy. I enjoy people who are policy wonk people because I think that's the dialogue of the profession. If you really like good law making, you get into thinking, well, how do we tweak this? How do we make it better? We don't accept status quo. I'm of the belief that everything can be improved.

So I enjoyed that about him, but hated that he began the "hate government" talk. He rose to power by emphasizing the negative and making it popular politics. Newt knew that Congress should solve problems, unlike the new Republican leadership, which is denying that there are problems out there: "There's no problem with this whole so-called global warming. That's a hoax. So we're going to ignore it. There's no real problem because women aren't paid the same as men. That's just, you know, cry-baby stuff. It hasn't been a problem in the past. Women have had jobs. We're going to ignore it. We're going to ignore the interests of women who want a right to choose." All these issues that need

attention. Republican leadership doesn't know how to lead. It requires investment in government and finding savings too. But if you're anti-government, you don't invest in making it better. This attitude is a whole new and negative thing. Like what Trump does—a whole new negative, anti-government fear factor. It's not only: "we don't need to do it." It's that, "What your government is doing is wrong and you should be afraid of it."

The conservative view is we need to get rid of government. That's really going backwards. So I've really seen—from when Newt's revolution—and by the way his Contract for America was about a hundred items and I don't think any of them got adopted into law, except cut, squeeze, and trim programs. Welfare reform. They did do welfare reform. Very controversial. The Democrats voted against it and the Republicans voted for it. They had enough Republican votes. Again, Clinton signed it.

So Gingrich took over in 1995, and Clinton left office in the election of 2000. So for five years, under Republican control of the House, Clinton could veto a lot. And the biggest issues in our bill, where you have to get bipartisan support, is on the Appropriations bill. I'm a member of the Appropriations Committee. Newt Gingrich, as the Speaker of the House, had to go down to the White House and negotiate for the full House on spending levels. Of course, he's only negotiating for the Republicans' viewpoints.

But the stories I got back were that Clinton was such a great people person that when Newt would come down to the White House, Clinton would invite him and slap him on the back and they'd tell some jokes and get along really well.

And then Clinton would start saying, “Newt, I understand you’re reading such-and-such an author. I just finished his book and if you like that book, you’ve got to read this book,” and he’d pull it out.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: (laughs) And before they could even get into talking about budgets, Newt and Clinton would be talking authors and books. The Republicans got so mad because Newt would come back and tell the caucus, “You know, Clinton is really a bright guy. He’s really well read and he’s reading a lot of the stuff we’re kind of interested in reading. And he has a different—” And they’d say, “What the hell are you talking about? You’re supposed to go down there and slay him, not become his best friend.” (laughs) But Clinton could do that.

Newt tried to use the bluff of his leadership to shut down government and really hurt Clinton. But the president has the bully pulpit. He has the one microphone. Four hundred and thirty-five members of Congress have the congressional microphone. One person has the presidential microphone. And President Clinton said, “If you send this bill to me, I’m going to veto it, even if it’s going to shut down government.”

Reti: Which bill was that?

Farr: This was the appropriations bill in 1995. Clinton did exactly what he said he would. And Newt gets up and says, “See, all these parks are closing and everything else is closing. And you can’t get your permits and your passports. And it’s Clinton’s fault. He vetoed the bill.”

We did it through congressional process and Clinton said, "I told you. If you're going to be so mean and so penalistic for all these programs, I'm going to veto the bill." Clinton had the microphone and the press would come to him and repeat his explanation for the veto. After the shutdown of much of federal government, the blame went to the Republicans, not the president. This memory still hangs over the Republicans; most are fearful of doing it again.

The shutdown produced interesting local politics. For example, when people wanted to go to Yosemite and couldn't get in, they called Newt Gingrich and said, "Open up my park." And an interesting part—all the rural areas where these are parks are, were all represented by Republicans. So the Republicans were calling up their own leaders and saying, "I think we made a mistake. (laughs) I got my constituents really mad at me."

But that was very clever. And just the opposite sort of happens now. They're trying to push Barack [Obama], but I think Barack is in such a safe place that they know that he could veto a bill and they don't have enough votes, a two-thirds vote to override the president's veto. And he's vetoed several bills this year, but they've never brought him up for an override vote because they don't have the votes.

So we're stalemated right now and that's tragic. Because during the Newt-Clinton years, I don't think we were as stalemated as much we are now.

Reti: I see.

The Effort to Impeach President Bill Clinton

Okay, we have to talk about the effort to impeach Bill Clinton.

Farr: That was politically motivated. Right after the Monica Lewinsky incident, the Republicans in control decided, okay, let's impeach this guy. It was a very interesting lesson learned and I don't know whether it's ever been kind of broadcast this way, so far, or spun this way. But what you saw was the American people were very angry, very upset, very shocked—we were all just shocked by the actions of Clinton. But as the House adopted Articles of Impeachment—I mean, the way you have an impeachment is the House of Representatives is the party responsible for adopting an indictment, for actually finding causes for impeachment, and then voting on that, and then sending those causes to the Senate, where they form a trial. The chief justice of the Supreme Court sits as the judge; the Senate is the jury; and the House provides a team of prosecutors, all Republicans. The Democrats form the team of defenders. They hear the arguments in the case and the Senate votes like a jury, to convict. So as the Republicans had a special prosecutor and were spending millions of the taxpayers' dollars to have this prosecutor go out and find out all these evil things. And a lot of the Democrats were saying, "This stuff isn't impeachable. It does not warrant impeachment."

What I saw happen, and what I think really saved this country, and saved Clinton, is that as the public saw these sort of [rigged] trials, as people watched that, and saw that they were saying, "Well, wait a minute. I don't really know that he ought to be impeached. You in Congress can censor him, spank him, or

say you thought it was naughty, or whatever. But *we* elected him president of the United States.” And this is where Clinton, I think, really—his personality paid off—because when he ran for president, I think the biggest and the most common comment was, “That guy is everywhere. He shakes everybody’s hand. He knows your name. He looks at you right in the eye and you feel like you are important.” He was the best there is in politics, of making personal connections. So people in this country really felt like he was *their* president. They’d voted for him. And what they saw is now the Republicans were going to try to take their president away from them. And the message was, “Spank him, or discipline him if you want to. But we elected him president. You didn’t. And we’re not going to allow you to take him away, or impeach him.”

The mood swing in this country was really significant. So by the time the House voted on it, it went down on a partisan basis, the impeachment. And it went to the Senate, and by the time it reached the Senate, I think the Republicans were reading the polls. And the polls were not favorable to impeaching him. So that’s the way it went out. The case was presented in the Senate. I can’t remember if it went to Senate vote. I think the decision was that the Articles of Impeachment didn’t warrant impeachment.

But you know what is interesting—when I first heard about it, I really thought: this is a crisis in government. And what I also learned from it and saw happening in America, is that what Clinton did in reaching out and winning sort of the hearts and minds, not of everybody, but certainly it was the consensus of the country that they liked this president, is that is all you have to save a

democracy is “we the people.” If he’d been an unpopular president, that impeachment would have gone through.

Reti: So it hinges on personality.

Farr: No, it hinges on a lot of things— I don’t know if there’s a word for it. It hinges on trust, respect? I think, unfortunately, and this is what I’m worried about, is that since that moment we have gotten so vitriolic and so antagonistic and so negative in our elections, that people have kind of lost respect for government. And the next time we have a crisis in government, I’m not sure the public is ready to understand the gravity of that crisis.

I mean, that’s what leads me to be so fearful of Trump’s campaign. I’ll say this publicly, I think that an election electing Trump will have unintended consequences with foreign relations, with the stock market, with all kinds of things that people never thought would be influenced by such a radical change in government’s opinion. I don’t think he realizes that all ideas have to pass Congress to make law and appropriate money. But if he keeps advocating the way he has been in the campaign, it’s really going to shake up the nation.

So what we may see between the Clinton impeachment and a modern electoral process, is a major crisis in government and government’s ability to govern. I think that’s what’s at stake in America. It’s very serious. Because it *is* so delicate. I’ve been in electoral politics in local and state government, and grew up in a political house. My father was in the legislature. And not until walking down the halls of Congress one day in my early years did I say: you know, for the first time I really get it. This whole concept of democracy is all based on trust. And

compare that to when I was in the Peace Corps. People didn't have trust for laws. They didn't have trust for government. So when the government said, "Pay your income taxes," they'd avoid it. Government didn't have the infrastructure, or the professional ability to go out and collect it. So people said, "I don't like government. I'm not paying." And then you saw people who would never stop at a stoplight. "Why should I stop at a stoplight? I'm selfish. I want to get through." We have in the United States a culture of respect for the law. But it's so delicate. Because that's all it is: it's respect for the law, respect for election results, and respect for our leaders. That respect has to be nurtured constantly, just like any good relationship.

Reti: Right. It's a social contract.

Farr: It is! And if we go out and elect our elected officials and after the partisan fight we swear them in, now you are representatives for all the people—not just liberals or conservatives, or brown or white, or whatever. We are the "House of Representatives," not the House of a party, or an ideology.

I think right now this country is confused. I just heard Bill Clinton say this a couple of weeks ago and I thought it was very appropriate. He said, "This country has sort of emerged into, for all kinds of little separate reasons for our problems: the effect of the economy on your lives, even though the economy is doing overall better than ever, or better than modern times, for a lot of individuals they haven't seen that. So what you're seeing is there's a lot of anger out there. And he called it road rage. It's like road rage. Just angry. 'I don't know

what it is but I'm ticked that that guy cut in front of me. And I'm going to get him back."

So this road rage mentality is out there. And he said, "It's not just happening in our country. It's happening in other countries." Look at England and their Brexit vote. Austria came within just a few votes of electing a fascist government, as I recall. So there is this road rage mentality in other countries. And, if indeed, that is the prevalent viewpoint in the November elections in this year, 2016, other countries will follow, internally. They'll start electing wackos and they'll start suggesting, "Why do we need to be in these defense alliances and why do we need to be in these trade agreements? Let's be selfish. Let's pull up and think for ourselves." What kind of a world are we going to have when we're not an inclusive world? We're a selfish, country by country— It's going to be a miserable planet at that point. I have learned how delicate our democracy is because it's based on a fundamental belief that you can trust government, that it is good, and it is purposeful. And if we do anything to hurt that trust, we do it at our own peril.

Reti: Where do you think that trust began to erode, or when?

Farr: Well, I am sure people will write about it. We've sort of internally wondered where—because it sort of started with this fear factor, this anti-government— Ronald Reagan said, "We've met the enemy and it's us." He was the first one to criticize government per se, as being the problem. It became very fashionable in conservative viewpoints to say, "Oh, it's the government. Too much government. Big taxes. They don't do anything. They're a bureaucracy. Get

rid of them. Shrink them.” To the point where some people said, “Drown it. Drown the government. It’s not okay until it’s dead, which means we don’t need public schools. We’ll just take public money and give it to the students in vouchers. And they’ll go to private schools, but they’ll be unregulated, and so on. Let’s have firemen all work for profit, or policemen work for profit. Jails for profit.” I mean, these things have been tried in several communities and they’ve been total failures. But there’s still an idea that anybody but government can do it better and cheaper, when it just doesn’t make any sense. If you have to make a profit, then how can you do it better? You’ve got to squeeze services in order to make a profit.

I think it will be traced back to Gingrich’s rise to power. Before I got there, he was a lone wolf, using the privileges of the floor and what they call “special orders,” which is after we finish our regular business, any member of Congress can go down and sign up to speak for a minute, five minutes, or an hour, to say anything they want. C-SPAN live covers all floor action. Now, the desk staff has to stay there, and the sergeant at arms. But everybody else has gone home and gone to bed, and you can have a lone wolf down on the floor wailing away at anything.

Newt Gingrich was the first to really use that privilege. Those privileges in the past were used for if you want to get up and say “I disagree” with the whole idea of war,” or if you want to have kind of a seminar to educate the viewers with your monologue. But it wasn’t to specifically criticize an aspect of government. I mean, that could have been done, but I don’t think it was done very much. What he did is he started getting up and saying, “The problem is government. The

problem is Congress.” And he got a lot of attention and he started building up a lot of support at the grassroots, and right-wing money, which led to him overthrowing, essentially, the Republicans who were ahead of him in leadership seniority.

There is a story about the use of C-SPAN cameras during special orders. It happened before I got there. Tip O’Neill was Speaker of the House. And his staff came running into his office and said, “Turn on C-SPAN. Newt Gingrich is down on the floor. And because we have this rule that the camera has to stay on the speaker, nobody sees that there’s nobody in the chambers.”

The House owns the C-SPAN signal. It’s our cameras and our camera operators. C-SPAN started as an NGO to cover on TV the actions of Congress. We gave them the right to use the house broadcast system for their signal. C-SPAN is supported by a fee from every cable operator. C-SPAN wanted to have the coverage of Congress because it was what they were set up to do. But we said, “We’re not going to allow you to control the cameras. We do that. But you carry the signal.”

So the House rules were: keep the camera on the speaker. I mean, the idea was, hey, if the camera is going around and somebody is falling asleep, you don’t want the camera to see them doing that, or chewing gum or something. Nobody wants cameras to catch you off guard, right? So that was the reason, if we’re going to use cameras, let’s use them for keeping the focus on the speaker, that’s all.

But what Newt would do is say, “If anybody in the House disagrees with me that this is a problem, speak up now.” No answer, because nobody was there!

Reti: (laughs) Oh, God.

Farr: And he used this technique to show the viewer that nobody disagreed with his comments. One night, when Tip O’Neill was Speaker, his staff came in and said, “Mr. Speaker, look what Newt’s doing. There’s no way anybody can respond. He’s just murdering the House. What a derogatory thing to do to our institution.” And Tip O’Neill said, “Tell the cameraman to span the room.” And it was the first time the camera showed that there was nobody in the room. And Newt just became furious: “You violated the rules.” And the Speaker said, “Yeah, you violated the protocol of the House.”

But that rocketed Newt into notoriety. And he never stopped being negative about government and fear. It’s not only negative. You’ve got to *fear* this government and you’ve got to fear things. I think what we’ve really been doing is selling fear. When I was in the California Legislature, I realized how much law was being made based on fear—all the building codes, like fire codes and things like that, showed how many people feel fear now, that we had to have all these alarms in our house. I grew up in a town where nobody ever locked their door. We didn’t have alarms. No one locked their cars. No fear of evil. Fire sprinklers in every house, every room. Fear—your house could burn down even though it’s built out of brick and rock and cement. You got to have them in there. No exceptions. Selling this fear factor so people would buy all the security devices, including guns.

It's just little-by-little. Alarms on cars. And even inside your car. You not only have to have an alarm on your car, you've got to have an alarm on your stereo system that you have to unplug, or take with you, or something. (laughs) Alarms on anything you own. I was at a video shop the other day. I said, "What's your biggest sale item?" He said, "Surveillance. It's exploding. People want a video of every room in their house, so they can go on their trip to Europe and see if anybody is breaking into their kitchen, or a light is on in their bedroom, or something. It's just amazing what technology can do and people want it because they are afraid somebody is going to mess with their stuff."

So I think history will show that the leader of the road to fear in American politics, as we started down that path, was Newt Gingrich. After the 1994 election, it took center stage.

More on the Fort Ord Conversion

Most of my time in Congress, from the time I got there, was always about getting on the right committees and doing committee work. Timewise from the district, it was the re-use of Fort Ord. That was our biggest, biggest issue—all the complicated problems that came with closure of the largest military base in history, the size of San Francisco with 33,000 people. In shutting down Fort Ord, the army had never thought about how do we provide medical services to the men and women and their families who are left here on the Monterey Peninsula? Fort Ord had a big hospital, Silas B. Hayes, a four hundred patient hospital, which the students at the Defense Language Institute, or at the Naval Postgraduate School used for medical care. At closure, we still had about five

thousand people in uniform. All of them got served by that big hospital building out there at Fort Ord. There were plenty of doctors and nurses and the retired community, even widows of veterans living here—everybody got their services out there. They grew up with the military medicine and here was wonderful military medicine at this hospital. It was free. They didn't have any billing for it. It was one stop for everyone.

All of a sudden it closes. Military families said, "Well, where do we go now?" They had a clinic up at DLI, and still have one, a small one, for a sick call for students in uniform. But what about the spouses and children of people in uniform? The army said they have to go to private doctors using a kind of Blue Cross insurance called Tricare, which is a universal insurance plan for the military services. Only, just like Medicare, the doctors have to sign up for it, saying, "We're willing to accept those patients." And the payments were triggered to the Medicare payment system. And, as you know, we've got a whole other fight in this region on Medicare payments because they were the lowest in the United States. The Tricare payments were also the lowest in the United States. Plus, you're dealing with a different doctor when you're dealing with Medicare. These doctors are treating senior citizens, and you have a lot of different medicine going on with senior citizens than you do with young families of military. You need pediatricians and OB GYN doctors; they looked at Tricare reimbursements here and said, "We're not going to accept it."

So the army closed the hospital and all of a sudden, they had nobody to service their people. Local doctors weren't contracting with Tricare to provide care. Tricare had to fly in doctors and put them up in hotels and say, "You see our

patients.” They had to do that until they finally made an agreement with a couple of medical groups to provide that specialized care.

So the post-Fort Ord closure had a huge impact on both the military community and civilian community. A lot of battles and issues evolved that nobody had tried to solve. And I think what we enjoyed and were frustrated with was that we were the first members of Congress to really deal with so many micro issues. We were also the first ones who could figure out the solutions because BRAC law shifted the responsibility to local reuse authorities. And we’ve done a lot of remarkable things with the Fort Ord closure that have become models, including the Monterey Model, where the city of Monterey took over the operational costs of the Defense Language Institute. Essentially that argument was: “Hey, you have a military base that’s all inside the city. And you have the Naval Postgraduate School that’s all inside the city. In your city, the military city, you have a fire department, you have a police department, you have a public works department—you have everything. That’s the same thing we have, right outside the gate. Why don’t we take over all those responsibilities? We’re already doing them on a big scale, so adding you to our rostrum isn’t going to cost that much. And with that, we can lower your cost of operations by millions of dollars.”

Allowing the army and navy to have the authority to contract out required special law. We worked on that special legislation, creating a model where they could try to reach an agreement with the City of Monterey. Since then, we got it expanded to cover all states. Every military base now can do what Monterey is doing. And they are saving millions of dollars. And the air force has even gone broader and said, “Hey,” to the local community, “Do you have any ideas of

anything that's going on on the base that you'd like to partner with us on, or do for us?" And people would come forward. The air force told me, "We had no idea there were so many creative things that we hadn't thought of."

So I think this crisis that was created here, with Fort Ord closing, was also an opportunity to re-invent government, and re-invent a more collaborative government to deal with a lot of these problems that appear when you have a system that's just been in the same-old, same-old military method and everybody knows how it works, and all of a sudden, it's gone. How do you fill that gap, when the money has gone with the people who have left? It's not just, well, we'll find a new employee. You've got to find a whole new governance system. And I've enjoyed dealing with all the issues raised, even with creating a new governance structure at the local level to deal with reuse. Senator Mello and I created FORA, which I talked about in our past discussion.

Serving on the Appropriations Committee

And that led up to my first term. I was first on the House Defense Committee. I was a new member of Congress. Few committees had openings. I chose the Defense Committee so I could influence the Fort Ord transfer. I used that position to get DOD to pay attention to all the issues at Fort Ord. By the end of the year, we heard that the Pentagon knew who Sam Farr was and what he wanted. Our office was a pain in the butt for the Pentagon, but necessary to get their attention.

Several years later, an opportunity came along, when Vic Fazio decided to retire. He was a very well-respected congressman from the Sacramento area and

decided to retire. He had been on the Appropriations Committee. And Nancy Pelosi was responsible for the California delegation. And it was a California seat.

So I called George Miller and said, "You know, I'm kind of bored on these committees that I'm on and I'd love to get on Appropriations." He said, "That's the most important committee in Congress. I would do it if I didn't have so much seniority." Because when you go from one committee to another, you go to the end of the line on the new committee. You lose all your seniority. He'd been chairman of the Resources Committee; he was chairman of the Education Committee. He said, "Boy, if I was younger, I'd do it. Why don't you do it?"

I said, "How do I do it?" He said, "Well, first of all, you've got to get all the votes of the California Democrats. Just let them know. Start calling them one-by-one and asking them if they'll support you. And once you've got the majority of the votes in the caucus, then you go to Nancy and say, "I've got the caucus." Then she has to find out—every other state is going to want that seat. There's a vacancy on Appropriations and why should California have it? They already have a couple of other people on the committee." So I think when I finally got my appointment, I beat out fifty-seven other Democrats who were trying to get on Appropriations. And the credit for all that goes to Nancy Pelosi, for her strong ability to sustain the seat. Now that I'm leaving, I don't know, because there's so much pressure from other states, and people who have done things for the party and paid their dues and been good members of the party and caucus, they're awaiting their ability to have some access to a higher appointment. So it will be an interesting fight all over again to see who fills my seat.

The Events and Impact of September 11, 2001

So then 9/11 comes along; that was just a shock. That day I'd been working on the Oceans Caucus issues. Leon Panetta had been chair of the Pew Charitable Trust Oceans Commission and he was in Washington. We agreed to get members of the Oceans Caucus to meet with him at 8am. Background, remember we had the first White House Conference on the Oceans in Monterey in 1998; it was also the International Year of the Oceans. It was the year they were celebrating the Year of the Oceans with a World's Fair in Lisbon, Portugal. We had a lot of discussion about oceans. At the same time, the Pew Charitable Trust had created a commission to look at the future of ocean management—the federal government had created a lot of legislation dealing with separate issues, sort of stovepipe, silo, you know, the navy, coast guard, with buoys and defense, and different marine mineral managements to patrol for all the drag stuff under the sea, to find out where all the mineral deposits were, and marine fisheries. And nobody ever talked to each other, and they found that the Mineral Management Agency drag boats were dragging up all the pots that crab fishermen and lobster fishermen were putting out. I mean, there was loss of money to all of them and there was no way to get the money back. It was just a mess, these conflicts in the sea. It was time to reauthorize and rethink ocean issues.

So I'd been very interested in trying to figure out how do we—as long as we're all studying this and how to make it better—and Pew Charitable Trust is a nonprofit and they had a bipartisan group of people. Locally, we had Leon Panetta and Julie Packard on the commission. But the chair of the committee was

Christie Todd Whitman, who was the former governor of New Jersey. But she'd been chosen by Bush in early 2000, to be the secretary of interior. So the vice chair was Leon Panetta, the other political person on it. So he rose to be chair.

So Leon was coming back to brief people on what the Pew Charitable Trust's ocean recommendations were. And I was chair of this caucus on oceans, so I invited my caucus members to have a briefing by Leon at eight o'clock in the morning on September 11, 2001. And we had that briefing and broke about nine o'clock.

Then I went right from there to Dick Gephardt's office. He was the minority leader. We were thinking about how we were going to handle the Republicans' appropriations bill when it got to the floor. We were all sitting at the round table in Dick's office when one of his aids rushed in—and there's TV's in every single room in the Capitol—and said, "Turn on the television set. They just had an airline fly into a tower in New York." And everybody thought, how stupid can that be? What gross negligence. Must be the pilot, or something. What's going on? It was all thought of as just a horrible accident.

And while we were sitting there watching, the second tower got hit. And everybody thought, oh, my God. This is no longer an accident. Something is going on. We had no idea what the hell was going on. I just remember that Gephardt said, "This changes our entire day and agenda. We're not going to be focusing on budgets anymore." And we all got up to leave and we didn't know what was going to happen.

The floor session was going to begin at 10am, so I said, “Well, I’ll just stay over here in the Capitol, rather than going back to my office.” And all of a sudden, the Capitol police came running in and said, “Get out, get out! There’s a plane headed towards the Capitol!”

Reti: (gasps)

Farr: So we all went running. We panicked: “Get out, get out as fast as you can.” You go to the door, and there weren’t a lot of people there, so it wasn’t like a human madhouse. When we got out on the lawn—and by the way, my staff was told the same thing in their offices—so everybody is sort of outside figuring out where—with cell phones, I think—I don’t know how we could find one another. But we were out on the lawn and we finally figured, hey this is—if a plane is coming in here, why are we standing here? Let’s get the hell out of here.”

Reti: (Nervous laughter)

Farr: My apartment was about a block away. My staff said, “Let’s go to your apartment and then we can reconnoiter and find out what we’ve got to do. We’re going to get calls from our families and everything like that.” Somebody on my staff said, “Hey, that plane is still in the air and it’s still headed here. What the hell are we doing a block away? What if they miss the Capitol and hit this street? Let’s get the heck out of here.” (laughs)

So we go to my chief of staff’s apartment—now it’s about noon—we go there, you know, about a mile away. The staff is sort of sitting around and I’m getting calls from Shary saying, “We have friends in the district whose daughters and

friends are working in the Twin Towers and they want to know— And they can't get through. Nobody can get through."

Lindsay Hatton, one of them, was my daughter's close friend. Lindsay has just been written up locally because of this book she's done on Cannery Row. But she was working in a financial office, a hedge fund or something in the Twin Towers. No one could reach her, so her mom calls Shary. Shary calls me, I call the Capitol Police to connect with New York. No one can get through. Finally, she got ahold of her mother. She told her mother that she'd been to a dentist's appointment that morning and had gotten to work late. She got out of the cab as panic erupted and started running with the crowd. (chokes up) Isn't that incredible? So getting to work late saved her life.

But what was probably the most shocking thing of all—Rochelle Dornatt, who is my chief of staff, has been in Washington a long time and knows a lot of people. She has friends in every government agency all over Washington. And one of her professional female friends worked in the Pentagon and called Rochelle, saying, "Does Congress have any way of getting ahold of my daughter, who works in the Towers. I haven't heard anything. What do we know?"

I mean, nobody could get through. All the lines were out. There was no special way for Congress members to do anything. Everybody thought, well, Congress must have a special line. We didn't. We'd called the sergeant of arms office and they'd said, "There's no way we can get through." So this friend of Rochelle's— she calls back and says, "I know it's been really hard for you. I'm really happy. My daughter just got ahold of me. She's okay." And Rochelle said, "Oh, I'm so

glad to hear that." She hung up the phone and the plane flies into the Pentagon and kills the mom.

Reti: (gasps)

Farr: My chief of staff has never gotten over that. Never. Just the whole personal, emotional involvement of a mom worrying about her daughter, and the daughter telling her she's okay. And then having to tell the daughter, "But your mom is no longer okay." Ooh.

Reti: (long sigh)

Farr: So what happened on 9/11 is that all people who didn't have to be in Washington—I mean, members of Congress and all the constituents, and people like Leon [Panetta]—he had to get back home. Many people like him, they went as fast as they could to a rental car agency, and rented a car, and drove all the way across country. No airplanes were flying. The only transportation was ground transportation. The cars were out; people rented moving vans, anything that had wheels.

There were several people in Washington from the district all trying to call me: "How are you getting home?" I said, "I'm trying to get on the first plane out of town because of my daughter's wedding. Every time I get a reservation and they tell me the plane's going to leave, at the last minute it's canceled. So I don't know what's going to happen. I have no way of assuring anybody."

What was fascinating inside Congress was: “Sam’s got to get home for his daughter’s wedding”—really became one of those things that got attention. My colleagues wanted to be helpful, so they decided to help me.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And all-important people in Congress were saying, “We’ve got to get Sam home. That’s what’s important.”

Reti: Aw. Something positive to focus on.

Farr: Oh, they were calling the military and saying, “Do you have any way?” Norm Mineta was secretary of transportation and his chief of staff was very close to my chief of staff. What had happened was right after 9/11 they had these emergency protocols about: how do we ban people from getting on planes? I mean, these guys got onto planes with not big weapons and stuff—they had knives—and they weren’t searched. How do we begin a process of doing thorough searches of people and their baggage and everything? They wouldn’t allow any plane to leave any airport in the United States unless they adopted these protocols, which immediately meant that the airlines had to hire all these people and teach them like in twenty-four hours how to do searches.

So what happened was these planes would be scheduled to leave and the powers-that-be just said, “You’re not up there yet. We don’t think you’re good enough, so you can’t have a plane leave.” So all the planes were grounded for two or three days. Nobody was flying anywhere. That’s why ground

transportation became such a hot item. People were renting U-Haul trucks as rental cars to drive (laughs) around in.

Reti: Yeah, my dad was stuck with me. He was on his way to China. He was living with me for a few days there.

Farr: So what happened is that finally American Airlines said that they were going to fly to Los Angeles. And we have a flight on American Eagle that flies from Los Angeles to Monterey. I remember driving to the Dulles Airport and calling Norm Mineta's office and saying, "You know, we've had these false starts for the last few days; each time when I've been trying to get to the airport I've been told, 'The plane has been canceled.' It's about a forty-five minute drive out to Dulles. Is this flight going to get canceled?" And he said, "We're in contact with everybody at the airport and the tower and all assurances are that it's going to fly." I said, "Well, god, thank you very much. Thank you for all your help." And then he said to me, "And if that doesn't happen, Secretary Mineta has arranged transportation for you." (laughs) I said, "What is this, military air?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "I cannot fly military air to go to my daughter's wedding. (laughter) I don't care what happens. That would be the last thing I ever could get—" But that was how—but what a wonderful gesture, because everybody was saying, "We got to get Farr home."

So I got home late Thursday night. It was really interesting going out to Dulles. We were the first plane to leave Dulles airport. It was really scary. I mean, nobody was in the airport except all the employees. And all the employees were looking at all the passengers going to this one flight. And the passengers were all

looking at each other, like, have we got any Middle Eastern people getting on this plane? Have we got any people that are going to use this plane for a terrorist act? I mean, it was just suspicion and glancing. It was interesting. Not much talk.

But when we were on the plane, just as they closed the door the pilot comes on and welcomes us and says, “We are the first plane to go out of Dulles. If all of you on the left hand side of the plane will look out of your window, you’ll see how much appreciation we have for you coming on this flight.” And the entire American airlines crew—pilots, flight attendants—because they’d all shown up for work hoping that their planes would be released, including all the ground crew, baggage people—they were all lined up with a gigantic American flag saying, “God bless America.” Everybody on that plane had a tear, you know. (chokes up)

So we get to LA (laughs) and American Eagle is going to fly to Monterey, fortunately. I saw people lying and sleeping on the floor all over the LA airport because of all the planes that had been grounded there. People had to sleep in the airport for a couple of days. They were trying to get home. You had regular scheduled flights and grounded flights all competing for departure times

So American Eagle is going to take off on time, going to Monterey. There’s only two passengers. It was a military guy and myself on this little tiny plane. And I thought, wow, I’m proud that they’d fly the plane even though they only have two passengers. But (laughs) we’re about three-quarters of the way up to Monterey and the pilot comes on and he says, “We’ve just got some bad news. Monterey is pretty fogged in—”

Reti: Oh, no!

Farr: “So they’re diverting us to Fresno.” And I just told this guy, “This is a joke, but I’m ready to hijack this plane!” (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: “We’re going to Monterey. We got to go to Monterey!” So the pilot comes on a bit later and he says, “Well, we’ve been cleared to land in Monterey.” So finally, that whole cross-country trauma and the—I mean, you lived it for days. Trying to get out of town and seeing the airport there. And seeing the Los Angeles airport just reminded everybody of what an incredible tragedy this was, but how it affected us globally.

And then my daughter is in tears because half the people coming to her wedding—and the wedding is a big deal for her.

Reti: They can’t get there.

Farr: They can’t get there. Her bridesmaid was in Europe coming home from Italy, and they grounded her plane in London. And then I talked to a guy at the at the Monterey airport. He said, “My family was all grounded in London.” I said, “Well, how did you get back so fast?” He said, “Oh, I just called the Monterey airport and asked them to send me a plane.”

Reti: From Monterey to London?

Farr: Yeah, they have private jet service out of here.

Reti: I'm going to have to stop you, Sam, because the office staff has to close down the office for the night.

Farr: Okay.

Reti: I'm sorry.

Farr: That's all right.

The Iraq War

Reti: So today is Wednesday, August 31, the last day of August 2016. This is Irene Reti. And I'm here with Sam Farr, this time at the UCSC McHenry Library, because Sam is being honored today by the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems for his long-time support of organic farming and sustainable agriculture.^{xxxix} So we thought we'd do a little interview before you go off to the Farm today.

Farr: It's a special day, too, because last night was our 48th wedding anniversary.

Reti: Oh, happy anniversary!

Farr: Thank you.

Reti: Wow, forty-eight years.

So, last time we ended with the trauma of 9/11 and everything that you went through at the Capitol, and the difficulty of getting back here for your daughter's wedding. The difficulty with the airplanes. So I thought I'd continue along that

thread today, with talking about what came right after that, which was the Patriot Act, and the Iraq Resolution shortly after that.

Farr: Well, what's very interesting is when you have a national disaster like you had with 9/11, that's when people expect governments just to *do* something, you know, stop it, don't ever let it happen again. And every elected official rushes back to their legislature to do something, feels, we've got to pass something. So you pass resolutions condemning the act.

And then Bush had a State of the Union address. That was very interesting. I remember specifically thinking, you know, here's a president that isn't very popular, and people don't think he's very bright, and he has a hard time completing a sentence. He's got to address the nation, when the whole nation is going to be keyed in. This is going to be more than just State of the Union. And he's got to do well. I wondered whether he could. Because if he limps through it, then you've got a nation at risk. People don't have confidence in their president, the commander in chief.

Obviously, he was told all this and his speechwriters wrote a good speech. And he probably practiced it over and over and over again because he delivered it really well. I think people felt comfortable that Bush, as commander in chief, at least had gotten enough advice and was listening to people, that we could get through it. And he did a lot of things—you know, people are on edge, so you want to use explosive language just to satisfy your angry constituency. That's when he created the phrase "axis of evil." That was scary to me because he put Cuba on his list.

Reti: Why?

Farr: Because they're a Communist country and they're at our border. And we never knew what went on in Cuba. I mean, we probably spied the heck out of them and we still couldn't figure out what they were up to. What happened was that Cuba had actually, rightfully so, decided that they were not going to make it as an agrarian country, an island country selling sugar cane, like every little island in the world did, grew sugar cane and sold it, and that was the market. If sugar was collapsing, you couldn't have a future economy. And since they had put a lot of emphasis on building schools and getting every single kid in the country into school, you now had this intellectual capacity. And how could they capture that? So what they decided to put their emphasis on was the pharmaceutical industry. Well, that's chemicals. So they had all these chem labs and things like that. And everybody thought, "Oh, yeah. Now they're going to get into biologicals and be biological terrorists." I mean, the Bush administration was looking for excuses to put Cuba on the axis of evil list, so— And we tried to fight that in Congress and couldn't get anywhere.

I think history will show that Bush really made a mistake. He did capture the incident; the 9/11 plane crashes and loss of lives did capture the emotions of Americans. And they were willing to come together as a country to support a reaction. That reaction obviously was debated, as to how much of a reaction? Is it just a diplomatic reaction, or is it going to require an invasion, which eventually it did: the invasion of Iraq. But that wasn't really on the table right away.

Where I think he really missed is this is a time you can say, there is no free lunch. Our country has to pull together, and we're going to invest in our military and intelligence and diplomatic resources, to really have an appropriate, measured response. We need to pay for it, but he never asked for money. I doubt that we would have had the stock market crash at the end of his eight-year term, had he gone out and raised revenues to pay for the war in Iraq. I think this is what flipped the Republican Party from being the party of conservative financial politics, to a party saying, "Well, the debt was only a small percentage of the GDP of America and we can bear that debt." We put war on a credit card.

So they went out, and all throughout his terms, whenever there was a big expense item, they just put it on the credit card. And then when it got to, well, that credit card is overextended and money is due, then they said, "Let's cut domestic programs," what they call "entitlement programs." I mean, "There's all these people on welfare and Social Security and things like that. And the cost of healthcare. We ought to just cut those programs and certainly not cut defense." And we're still having that debate today, in the Obama administration. Oh, and Bush repealed the taxes that Clinton had put in place. People forget. I mean, Clinton raised taxes, very controversially. I think we talked about that. But those taxes balanced the budget.

Reti: Yes.

Farr: And for three consecutive years, he had a surplus budget. And what Bush did is he ended the surpluses. Clinton handed the surpluses over to Bush. And then Bush campaigned against those taxes, saying if he was elected he would

repeal them. The irony is nobody was complaining about them. It wasn't, oh, my God, the economy is suffering because people are paying more taxes. I think history will show that the last four years of Clinton, the economy grew better than ever and people's actual buying power grew. It hasn't grown since. But because everybody's buying power was growing and business was increasing, people didn't mind paying more taxes. I'm sure some did. I mean, the Republicans are a broken record no matter what: "We don't care whether you like paying taxes or not. We're going to repeal them, or not allow you to pay them." And that was a big mistake, for Bush to do that, because we went to war, it cost a lot of money, more than anybody had ever expected, and we had no way to pay for it.

And then we enacted his Medicare Part D. The pharmaceutical drug [portion] was much needed. But the theory going into that, it was about the same time, it was post 9/11—was just: let's just expand Medicare because we have a system in place for collection of bills and paying for bills, and it has very little overhead, very low administrative costs. But no, Big Pharma, which had really supported the Republican Party overwhelmingly, they got what they wanted out of all that money they put into Republican campaigns because they adopted the bills Big Pharma wrote, legislation that ended up with the American taxpayer subsidizing the pharmaceutical companies to provide medicine to low-income people. So essentially, it was up to the pharmaceuticals to give discounts. And they argued that this would be cheaper than the Democratic plan of expanding Medicare. You create a whole, new administrative arm of government, a very expensive one. And the pharmaceuticals, they could just drop drugs anytime they wanted to.

And then they had this whole thing called a donut hole. We cleaned a lot of that up with Obama's healthcare plan. But again, it ended up shifting the cost to debt. The government needed to borrow the money to make this Medicare Part D work.

So the two big expenditures that came after 9/11 that kind of bankrupted our country were the war in Iraq and that Medicare Part D prescription drug reform.

Reti: And the cutting of taxes at the same time.

Farr: And cutting of taxes.

The Patriot Act

Reti: Yes. So let's go back to the Patriot Act. I know you voted against that.

Farr: Yes, it was interesting. The Patriot Act was drafted in the Judiciary Committee. It was a bipartisan bill. And it passed out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously, which shocked me, because some of the most liberal members of Congress, Jerry Nadler from New York; I think John Conyers is on that Judiciary Committee too—they voted for it. Well, the committee bill went to the Rules Committee, controlled by the Republican leadership, and the Rules Committee didn't like the bill. So they rewrote it overnight. From the time it passed committee to the time it hit the floor, it was a new bill. At first, we were glad that the Judiciary Committee had had a good bipartisan bill, but shocked it had been changed. There was the sense of Congress reacting to the public need: you guys crack down on some of these loopholes and don't allow people like these

terrorists to get into the country, much less get into airplanes with knives and all that other stuff.

So we thought, in going to the floor, that the Rules Committee had passed the same bill. But when we got to the floor, the message was, no, they totally rewrote it.

Reti: Now why didn't they like it? Why did they rewrite it?

Farr: I don't know. There were probably too many Democratic things that they weren't interested in. Remember, you are getting into elections and everybody is trying to blame the other party for doing—I mean, we're doing the same thing now. Republicans won't appropriate money to pay for the Zika virus. They're saying, "Well, you've got money left over from Ebola and you can just move that money around." You can't just move money. And that's what the [Obama] administration says. This is ridiculous. That's like saying, "There's still money left over from the Sandy Hook disaster, so when we have these fires out in California, let's just pay for them out of that." You just can't move money like that.

And so what happened with the Patriot Act is that [the Republicans] rewrote it all. I went to the floor and I thought, wow, I don't know how to vote on this thing. I was probably going to vote for it because of the unanimous consent of the Republicans and the Democrats. I thought, well, it's probably a pretty good bill. However, I talked to Jerry Nadler, who I always thought was a pretty good policy wonk guy, especially on constitutional issues, a liberal Democrat from New York City, a former New York legislator, and one of the guys who is really

articulate on constitutional issues and legal issues. And Jerry said, “You know, I haven’t read it. Nobody on our committee read it. Don’t pass it, because there will be something in here that, if it passes, that you didn’t know about, and you’re not going to like it.”

I asked Zoe Lofgren, and she was on the committee, and she said, “I think it’s okay.” So anyway, I was torn between two friends, one saying it’s okay and the other saying it’s bad. I was trying to get my staff to find out what was in it and it was very hard to know. I think we just came to the conclusion that, look, there’s too many things that some of these conservative Republicans want, so much sort of meanness, you know. They go too far. So we’re going to err on the side of caution and vote against it. Because if it went down, then we could write another bill.

Well, it passed, unfortunately, because you were being threatened. If you didn’t pass the Patriot Act, then you weren’t a patriot. This was election eve time. No candidate wanted to be labeled unpatriotic in the election after 9/11.

Reti: Did you feel threatened?

Farr: I didn’t. I mean, I represent Santa Cruz. And I believed we didn’t feel so threatened that we needed to step on due process and erode human rights. There was enough stuff in the bill that probably would have hurt this community. I just—I think this is a necessary national dialogue—with all of the electronics that we’re using now, the issue of government snooping—and yet people want the government to reveal everything that Hillary Clinton had on her cell phone messages and her emails. But they don’t want the government to know anything

about their own personal lives. So it's kind of—we're going through a new dynamic. I think we're really shifting. I mean, we're in one of the few countries in the world that doesn't have a national ID. You don't carry anything in your wallet that's federal—maybe if you're a pilot, you'd have a federal pilot's license, but everything else is a state license: your driver's license. Maybe a Social Security card, but you don't have to be a citizen to have a Social Security card. And we don't carry our Social Security cards, that I know of, because we are never asked to show them. You know your number and that's all you need to have. We want government to protect us, but we oppose a National ID system. The United States may be the only industrialized countries without a Center of ID and Vital Statistics.

So certainly, about that time, 2001, that was a time of: Just keep government off our backs. Just keep it on the backs of anybody who is going to be a bad person and do evil to our country. I think we're still having that debate in this country. Then I think we were a lot more afraid of government snooping than we are now. Facebook makes a mockery of privacy; we are now a society using all kinds of electronic forms. Your cell phone lists your private number, and your bank accounts, and you can give people Social Security numbers and things like that all the time, and with that, they can research an awful lot about you.

Reti: Yes.

Farr: So anyway, I'm glad that I didn't support that act. And I didn't support it on its revision either. Because what happened in that act, and why it got to be so criticized, is that they set up an ability to have a FISA [Foreign Intelligence

Surveillance Act]. In essence, it was hand-picked federal judges who would be able to give search warrants for the government to listen in on phone calls being made by people living in the United States but calling abroad. And just like a regular search warrant, where law enforcement has to go to a judge, and the judge is supposedly very protective, essentially, “I don’t give search warrants unless there is a compelling reason, not just that you think somebody’s a bad person and you want to listen in on them. Show me the proof”—and the judge weighs that evidence. That’s supposed to give you, as the individual, some protection. The government can’t just go and search anything they want. And with that, they can get a warrant and then tap your line.

Well this, was essentially a special group of judges who were appointed and had a judge to report to, who’ve all got intelligence clearance and things like that. But what we found out, after years, is that they really just sloppily—no judge had ever turned it down. So the criteria that the intel agencies used were pretty weak. And yet, they got whatever they wanted. So that’s why we kind of had a backlash on that and cleaned it up a little bit with the second bill. But still, the cleanup wasn’t enough, so I didn’t vote for it on the second time.

The Iraq Resolution of 2002

Reti: Okay. Now what about the Iraq War? I know you also voted against that.⁴

Farr: Well, the Iraq War, at the time of the debate was—you know, I remember, if you go back and discuss what we did on the floor to condemn the actions and whether we were even willing to invade Iraq—Bush wanted to invade Iraq and came to Congress and said, “Give me the authority.” And Congress said, “No,

we don't ever do that for any president; we will never give you carte blanche to go to war." We said, "What we'll do, this is a part of the world where we don't have much credibility, and we don't have a lot of diplomatic relations, and these are really strange countries, and we don't understand them very well. We're a member of the United Nations and indeed if we should go into Iraq and this is a global war on terrorism, then we've got to have global partners. So let's walk the proposal through the United Nations before Congress gives authorization."

And there were two viewpoints on that. One, the Democratic viewpoint, led by Barbara Lee, was that Colin Powell, as secretary of state, would take the argument to the United Nations and say, "This is all the evidence we have. Will you join us and be our partners in condemning Iraq and building the invasion?"

Reti: You're talking about the evidence of weapons of mass destruction?

Farr: Yes. To make all those arguments at the U.N. But then after you've made those arguments, depending on what the United Nations decided to do, you'd bring that back to Congress and make the argument before Congress. Get our allies onboard before we do anything.

The Republican [argument was] you make your argument at the United Nations, but regardless of what they do, we're going. So that was the version that passed.

So everything after the vote to give the president unlimited powers put a lot of us in suspicion. If we're going to have a global war on terrorism, then we needed global partners, a good argument because we weren't the only country that was having incidents—the Philippines had them; Indonesia had them, and so on—

let's get an international, global war on terrorism, not just the United States going alone.

I mean, there is going to be a lot of hindsight now. I think what we proved, and what I argued is, you can get in but how the hell are you going to get out? Particularly—and here's one thing that we really missed in Congress, and we didn't debate it enough—you know, I was really lucky, Irene, because I represent this area with incredible intellectual capacity on international issues, with the Naval Postgraduate School, the Defense Language Institute, and what we then called the Monterey (now Middlebury) Institute of International Studies. And in that school, there's a center for nonproliferation, for studying all these weapons of mass destruction and how to stop them, how to manage them if you have them, safeguard them and all those things.

So the MIIS had this faculty, which had former Iraqi arms inspectors working for them at the institute. So I went over to the school when I got home on the weekend and I'd get sidebar counseling. "Here's what we're debating in Congress," and they were certainly well aware of it, down to the details of every sentence, "And what do you think?" I had two people sit in the meetings. One was a specialist who had been on the international inspectors team, seeing whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. He was a rocket specialist. His point was the kind of rockets they have and their capacity to function is lacking. And he said, "They don't have anything other than old, old SCUD missiles. And SCUD missiles have a very limited range. And every missile, including SCUD missiles, has to be constantly maintained, like a fine-tuned car, because if you don't service them, like to change the oil and gas and all that other stuff, there's a

large failure rate. They have not been doing that. So these are essentially warehouse missiles that won't perform very accurately if they tried to use them right now. And besides that, they have a very limited range and we have enough Intel to discover—" So he was very against claiming that Iraq had any weapons of mass destruction that could do significant damage. Some to Israel, a neighbor, but not that much, and certainly not beyond.

The other one was an inspector, as I recall, a chemist who was looking for poisonous gases, biochemical weapons. And again, he said, there weren't any. At the Naval Postgraduate School, the officers who talked to me said, "You know, we're all in the military and we support our military's commands, but we don't think we should be doing this war. This is not our war. And if we do do it, we've got to get a lot more countries involved, and their intelligence, and their command involved."

So I went back to Congress. The pressure politically in Washington is—whenever you have a big controversial issue all of the lobbyists come out, in this case, all the defense lobbyists and all the rah-rah America lobbyists were lobbying. I don't remember the exact month, but somehow it strikes me that it was in October, just before the November election. So a lot of people were worried about being patriotic. I'm talking again about the resolution of going to war with Iraq, right after 9/11. There was real pressure. If you didn't vote to go ahead with war, you were unpatriotic. So the big bill passes. I speak and vote against it. Soon after, the appropriation bill to pay for the war comes up. I voted against the first resolution and I just said to a couple of others, "Hey, if you don't really believe in this war, then don't pay for it." They said, "Well, I don't believe in the war, but it passed

and I've got to support it." I said, "No, Congress ended the Vietnam War, not the president, because we cut off the funds to the president. If you want to cut off the funds to this war, stop it right here. Don't pay for it."

Reti: Now, you are on the Appropriations Committee, right?

Farr: Yes.

Reti: So that was part of what you were working on, as part of your work on that committee?

Farr: Yes. Although that was brought up outside of the Appropriations Committee. I don't even think we had a debate on it in committee. We just took it right to the floor, with the leadership support. But I voted against it. My friends were trying to stop me from voting against it. I voted and went home so fast that they couldn't catch me to change my vote. (A vote lasts fifteen minutes. You put your card in the voting machine and vote, before the time runs out you can put your card in again and change your vote. Sometimes you make a mistake, so changing a vote is necessary. It's the end total that counts. All legislative bodies allow you to change your vote until it is announced: "That's final.")

And the next day, when I looked at the vote on paying for the Iraq War, there were only ten Democrats who had voted against it. I was proud to be one of those. Santa Cruz Democrats gave me a standing ovation. The city was the first in the U.S. to pass a resolution in opposition to the war.

Reti: Another standing ovation. Just like when you voted against the Defense of Marriage Act.

Farr: Yes. Those were two real controversial votes. One always wonders on a controversial vote whether you did the right thing for your district. I had a sense of who I was representing, the trust they placed in me to get the facts and vote right. I still think if all my colleagues could have had the briefings I got at MIIS and NDS, they might have voted the same way.

Reti: So that's where it comes back to democracy, who you represent.

Farr: Yeah, I think those are really good stories to tell. I sought out informed advice. You also got petitioned from students here at the university. On certain issues there is a fixed lobby opinion; you expect certain groups to always petition on the same thing—like the gun lobby, you know who they are and how they're going to petition you. Look, lobby groups are helpful in bringing you information. That's helpful, not necessarily convincing, but you learn what their group is thinking and when you are on the side of whatever that grassroots lobby asking, they show the numbers and say, "We're for you." And that really helps me.

But then there is the intellectual side. I wanted to do the right thing for my country, not just for my district. I sought out those other opinions. I thought, my God, if the military doesn't think that we should do this and the advisors who've been on the ground don't think we should do it—I mean, we could have bought more time.

And the trouble is, then when we went in and invaded we did it all wrong. But we got in there so damn fast. But then we kicked all the Ba'athists out of office. They run the country. Government employees were in a party because that's

how they got their government job. But they weren't loyalists. They were bureaucrats. And when we kicked them out, the museums shut down. People raided them and stole national treasures. There was no police force. I mean, we did the stupidest things that we could have possibly done, being the ugly Americans. We can get in, but we fail to win the hearts and minds of the host country, and can't get out. We're still there.

And what I wanted to say when we started this conversation, is where we really made the mistake when we went into Iraq. What people love most about American democracy is that we are able to defend the rights of minorities. And they listen to our civil rights battles, and our religious battles, and things like that. And although they may not agree, they respect a country that respects their religion, even though it might be a religion that's criticized in another country. But America defends your right to your beliefs, and your right to free speech, and your right to assemble, and all those wonderful constitutional protections we have for the individual. That is the positive symbol of America around the world. Essentially, it's the symbol that America protects minority interests.

What we did when we went to Iraq, is we just ignored that principle. We endorsed one party, and Iraq, if anybody studies the Middle East, has never had a sense of nationality. These were all tribal units of different religious sects, some Christian sects. We ignored everything and just went in there and said, "One size fits all." And all these minorities who were interested in having their struggles heard in their countries thought, America is coming. They're going to help us not be slaughtered and isolated and not be criticized because they're going to teach this new government of Iraq how to respect all rights. We didn't do that. So we

never captured the hearts and minds of people because we just were diplomatically ignorant. Or, I'm not sure we were ignorant not to know we should have done that, but we didn't choose to listen to tribal interests and help them support democratic principles for the new Iraq.

So it's been a fiasco. We went there and spent gazillions of dollars and lost a lot of lives and now it's all falling apart again because we didn't get in the right way. We didn't win friends and influence people enough where they would sustain how we made order.

Reti: Yes. Okay, well I'm glad we got that on the record. It's really an important part of the history of the last twenty years.

Farr: It was probably the ugliest time I was in Congress, until recently, when it's just gotten ugly for no substantive reason.

Reti: It was ugly because there was so much pressure to vote for the war?

Farr: It was ugly because you're just thinking: we're doing the wrong thing. What can we do? And you get up and you protest, and you give speeches, and you write letters, and you form caucuses, and you go to meetings. And despite all that, people rush to judgment. Congress is there—with the proper procedures we have in Congress—to be the check and balance. And the check and balance is that, just like we've seen in history and society, when there was a lot of anger pent up and people just took the law into their own hands and became vigilantes, you can have a vigilante effect in Congress too. It's just: get mad and find some way of punishment.

Reti: Mm, hmm. And so, once again, that politics of fear and what it leads to.

Farr: Uh, huh. Because once you've spread fear like we have, I don't know how we capture it all back. How can we go from hate to love? I think the American public really wants world peace. We just finished watching the Olympics, right? In Brazil. I think so many people who don't know much about sports are going to end up watching that opening night just for the pageantry. We Americans love pageantry. I mean, what more pageantry can you have than all these countries walking in, and as the commentator is talking to you about it—these are countries that we've had wars with, or conflicts with, or Communist countries, or other ideological differences. But for a moment, all that is erased and forgotten. You are just citizen athletes, bearing your country's flag, walking into that stadium, and being welcomed onto the world stage of athletic competition. And we feel so good about the world that night: Look, we can all get along. We can all dance, and sing, and celebrate and respect each other's uniforms and flags. And then, all of a sudden, we just go back to forgetting what we did in that inclusive process. We were including everybody. And even though there were debates about outcasting the Russians for drug abuse and drug enhancement and things like that, they still had another whole group there of unaffiliated athletes whose countries wouldn't allow them to participate. And yet, they came in, without a flag, where they were kicked out of their own countries, whatever, but appeared with applause.

But the whole night was one world at peace. And then we go off to compete. But the message was there that in order to create that peace, everybody has to feel included. You want them all on the ship, on the ship of peace.

This campaign that we're running for president of the United States right now is one of excluding people: Let's not allow any Syrians into our country. Let's not allow Mexicans across the border, our border. The biggest economic border in the world is the Mexico-U.S. border. Mexico is California's number one trade partner. And we're going to build a wall all the way across and tell people, "We don't like you." That's wrong.

So these things that we go back and do, whether we're even approaching the global war on terrorism—on 9/11 we don't have to respond to that. We don't always have to be the global leader. If it's a global war on terror, then let's get global partners. Share the burden.

Reti: I want to take a little twist in the path here because I heard that you were part of some peace delegations that went to the Middle East?

Farr: No.

Reti: I was misinformed on that. Sorry.

Farr: Some friends of mine went—Jim McDermott, a congressman from Seattle, he went into Iraq before we invaded. He held a press conference there condemning our president. And he got—(laughs) I remember, it was so funny, because he came back and every newscast in the country was condemning him. And then one of the networks decided to follow him home to see how this guy who had taken these big risks, because he's a doctor, a psychiatrist, but he's very interested in the effects of radiation, and the effects of nuclear radiation on

children. And we were using these cluster bombs and other kinds of bombs that had radiation after-effects. That's why he went as a fact finder.

Reti: In Iraq.

Farr: In Iraq and in other countries, particularly Iraq. And he was bringing attention to that and at the same time criticizing President Bush. So he got beat up because people forgot what his message was, the fact that he went there at a time when we were thinking about invading. We shouldn't be paying any respect to the enemy. When the network ended up (chuckles) following him to his hometown, where they were going to have big demonstrations and he was having a town hall meeting, the media thought they'd film a political hanging. There was a demonstration in Seattle, not to hang Congressman McDermott, but to praise him. (laughs) Which was just contrary to everything else going on in the country.

Reti: (laughter)

Farr: The media went there to say, "Here's what happens to an American congressperson when he doesn't accept the status quo of politics and challenges it." Sort of what's happening now with [Colin] Kaepernick, the 49ers quarterback who has refused to stand up during the national anthem. And the reaction is—I think people are surprised at how much support he's getting from very serious sources. He's probably overwhelmingly being condemned.

Reti: His protest was tied in the Black Lives Matter movement protesting police violence against the Black community.

Farr: Yeah, he said, “Look, how can you have ‘justice for all’ and ‘America the beautiful,’ when you have so many people hurting financially and socially and so much racism?”

Anyway, these are all political incidents that have happened while I’ve been in office that I’ve been an observer of.

No, I was very involved in the Colombian peace accords, but not the Middle Eastern peace accords.

No Child Left Behind

Reti: Okay, we’ll talk about Colombia later, for sure. A couple of more issues from the Bush administration: the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Farr: Yeah, what was interesting about that was that Congressman George Miller from the East Bay had been chair, when the Democrats were the majority, of the Education Committee, and he’s been trying to write a modern education bill. What people don’t realize, until it’s pointed out to them, is that we have, in America, no national education policy. We’ve left it historically up to the states to create educational systems, in the K-12 system. California did it by allowing local school districts to form, and then giving them some incentive back in the fifties to take these hundreds of school districts, elementary school districts, (and I don’t even know if there were middle schools then), but gave them financial incentives to unify. But even with that, we still have about 1200 school districts in California. Hawaii, as I understand it, has one school district for the whole state.

So it's just a different way different states have approached it. And then, each school district decides what kind of tests they want to have, teachers they want to have. They do get a common curriculum. But we have no national standards, or no national curriculum. I don't think there's any other country that leaves it up to such rural kind of management, and not having an national educational policy, national standards, a national policy about what teachers will be paid all over the country, that kind of a thing. People are beginning to wonder—where are the good schools and where are the bad schools? Well, we know where all the bad schools are. The schools that are failing are where all the poor kids are. I sat on the Education Committee in Sacramento for thirteen years and the first thing you learn is that people can predict a child's academic outcome by the income of their parents. Well-educated people invest in their kids' early education and give them supplemental tutoring and stuff like that. And they have all kinds of after school activities. Poor kids don't get that. And in the long run, those kids who get all that additional enrichment do better than the kids who don't have it.

The federal government got involved in education by at least recognizing during the War on Poverty that you needed kids from poor communities to have preschool and kindergarten. And so we started Headstart programming on a national level. You needed kids to not be ignored by school districts because they happened to be migratory, from families that are moving around a lot, and therefore they drop in in the middle of the year. You can't say, "Well, too bad. We don't have room for you," or, "You'll just have to adapt." No, they need special help. They're going from one culture to another. So we created the Migrant Ed program. And we created the Special Ed program for kids with

special needs. So there have been what we call federal categorical programs, that the federal government has established and said to the states and territories, “You’ve got to incorporate these into your curriculum. And we’ll give you money to do it. We’re not going to give you a 100 percent of the money, but we’ll give you 25 percent of the money, and you’ve got to raise 75 percent of the money. Or 50:50. There are different formulas for different programs. But that is how the federal government has fingers in K-12 education. The rest is left up to the states.

So George Miller decides let’s put some meat on the bones. He used to teach—on days that he didn’t go to Washington—because we work four days a week; we either go back on a Monday and get out on Thursday, or we go back on a Tuesday and get out on Friday. So it was either on a Monday or a Friday when he was in the district and he would teach in a continuation school in the Oakland area, in the Richmond area. He really saw these poor kids and got close to them. He said, “We’re leaving all these kids behind. No matter what we do, we’re leaving them behind. This can’t happen. We’re giving all this money out. Let’s hold schools accountable for teaching every kid. Because nothing has changed.” I remember, somehow this struck me, he said, “If you take an average class in America, you’ll have a third of the students who can learn on their own. They’re just bright kids. They may not be the same third in every subject matter. But a third of the class will do okay, whether there’s a teacher there or not. A third is going to be in the middle. And they’re kind of struggling, but you give them a little help, professional help, and they can get into that upper third. Then there’s the third that just is not going to make it. They’re so far behind that it doesn’t

value putting teacher time into it because the teacher's got to take two-thirds and they kind of write off the one-third. Those are the children that are being left behind. And there's no reason our school systems ought not to be able to develop, using technologies in the classroom, getting assistant teachers in there, pulling kids out, getting tutorial practice—we're going to spend all these resources making sure that all the kids have a chance. And that was the goal, and Ted Kennedy, in the Senate, was very excited about these fresh, but controversial ideas.

So the story—and I don't know if it's ever been told, but George Miller told me because I asked him, I said, "How did you ever get this bill through the new Republican majority?" George had been chairman of the Education Committee, but the Republicans took over under Gingrich. And John Boehner, the former Speaker, he'd been on another committee. But the Republicans allow you to maintain your seniority, but not on the committee you're on. So if you've maxed out your term limit on that committee, you just move over parallel to another committee and you're a senior. So John Boehner moved over to the Education Committee to be chair, having never been on the committee, or never been in a responsible position like that, and certainly not in power, because the Republicans hadn't been in power.

So Boehner comes to George Miller and says, "George, I'm chairing this committee. President Bush wants this bill: No Child Left Behind. What will it take from the Democrats to get a bill out?" And George said to Boehner, "Look, you get rid of all the prayer in the schools stuff. And you get rid of a lot of these

other sort of right-wing things, and we can pass the bill. We're going to be tough on student accountability," which the Republicans wanted.

So Boehner says to George Miller, "Well, here's what we'll do. George, you write the bill. I'll get the votes." So George Miller and Ted Kennedy write the No Child Left Behind bill. Now, what ticked off all the teacher's organizations (and the blame all went to the Republicans) was that they were really harsh on having these states be accountable for kids that are failing. So they put all of this emphasis on test scores. Now, what's interesting about that is not every state has the same tests, because it's up to the schools as to what test you want to use. Before that, Clinton had tried to create a national testing pattern. He raised that with Congress, tried to get us to adopt it, and I was shocked to see that both the right wing and the left wing didn't want any national tests.

Reti: Why?

Farr: I think minority groups on the left just didn't want a national failure for minority groups, for all these reasons that led to No Child Left Behind. And the right-wing didn't want government swooping in on states' rights. So we never could adopt a national test. To this day, we have no national tests. There is an achievement test that schools—and I don't know if the federal government pays for it—but they are trying to get everybody. It's all voluntary. It's even voluntary for students to take it.

So testing in America is—I mean, as you begin [researching] the compatibilities of tests through statistical analysis or whatever, logarithms and so on, they can sort of compare one test with another. But the reality is that we've got to spend

more money on kids. To do that we've got to take it from defense accounts and give it to education accounts. But a lot of people don't want to do it. So many don't want to take money away from the military, which is a big, expensive program, but the only way to get big money without raising taxes is from the DOD budget.

No Child Left Behind passed in the first term of President Bush. And it was probably the last time that we really had a consensus, because it passed with overwhelming Democratic and Republican votes.

Reti: That was the last time?

Farr: And to Bush's credit, he built consensus. Because he got the Republicans in the room, where they were all talking about charter schools, prayers in schools, and stuff like that. And he said, "Look, I'm not—if you want to do charter schools, that's up to the states. I don't want to create a national chartership program. I don't want to have vouchers. If states want to do that, fine. I'm not going to order states to do that." So he essentially agreed with the Democrats that there were going to be no national prayer in school. Leave those as it had historically been done. Leave it up to the states.

So the bill, written by Democrats, passed. And there was a lot of excitement about it, until people really found out that kids were failing. And then schools were starting to be held accountable for it: why should we keep giving you the same amount of money when you keep having this pattern? Your kids aren't learning anything. And teachers got very defensive about it because all were being judged by test scores. Schools started eliminating all the electives. No more

music programs. No more band. No more choir. No more art programs. No more PE. We're all going to study, study, study and you're going to have tons of homework. And that still is one of the problems. Too much homework.

This led eventually to trying to get a national curriculum through Common Core standards—it's very revolutionary. Fortunately, I think what you've seen is that the academic world realizes the value of good educational standards. But for a lot of teachers, it's very threatening. And for parents it's threatening because their kids are coming home now with questions and needing help that the parents: "I don't know. What are they teaching you in school? That's not how I learned math. I can't answer your question." (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I think despite all this incredible opposition—there have been a lot of states fighting against Common Core—I think it's sort of like Defense of Marriage. It's getting people realizing, why fight this? This probably makes curriculum more relevant to teaching learning skills, teaching how to think.

What Congress is interested in is knowing about American education, who are the winners and losers in education. What we're interested in is, how do American kids compare to our competitors in other countries? How do our future leaders who are in grammar school today at a fourth-grade level compare to fourth-grade kids in Japan, and China, and Russia, the big leading industrial countries? The indicators are that America is not the leader of K-12 education anymore. Michael Moore recently did a movie that showed that Finnish schools are the best.^{xi}

Reti: I saw that movie, yes. Quite eye-opening.

Farr: Yes. So you're asking me about No Child Left Behind and all the challenges. I think what you're seeing is we're going through a period in American history when the focus is really on how to improve the whole nation. I mean, what we really know is that American cultures and the blend of all those cultures has made us the most creative nation on earth. We are sort of the free thinkers, in that we don't have one dominant cultural value. We always have these challenges and those challenges are having people think outside the box. And so, that creativity leads America to still be the center of creative music, creative arts, creative television, theater—creative ideas like Silicon Valley, now moving into the alternative energy worlds, and all kinds of really exciting things, where we want to have creative minds. And even though we might not have the best educational system in the world, we still have a system that stimulates people. We want to keep that. What does it take to keep creating that seed corn? We may lose the production line, like we have building television sets. We invented television, but we don't build the television sets anymore. We invented the microwave. We don't build the microwaves anymore. But we get the benefit of the intellectual property rights and all that stuff. That's what I think is the bottom core of Congress: how do we keep America creative? We have old world thinkers who want to protect oil and gas, coal mining, defense contracting, and agricultural subsidies, and we have new thinkers who want to explore wind and solar energy, sustainable economics, and organic foods, new frontiers, most of which are coming out of California.

Working for Organic Agriculture on the Federal Level

Reti: Well, speaking of creativity, let's talk about organics.

Farr: Oh, I love it. (laughs)

Reti: Because that's certainly an area in which you've been very involved. A few sessions ago, we talked about the California era, of passing the bill for organic certification, working with Mark Lipson and that whole group. I'm wondering if there was some experience in your early life that stimulated your interest in organic farming? For example, were you a gardener?

Farr: Oh, yeah, my mom—as I told you early on, I'm dyslexic. So I couldn't stand having to read books, but I loved experiential learning. And at our house in Carmel, on the south side of the house, we had a garden there. My mom was always planting stuff. And I loved that. I just loved planting. I loved watching things grow, and water then, particularly things like radishes that grow very fast. Oh, my God! That came from that little tiny seed?

And I love flowers and being able to—(laughs)—my first experience in human behavior was—I was always trying to raise money to go fishing, buy bait and take the bus over to Monterey. And so I was always thinking of ways—I'd do all the little stuff, do my chores, wash all the windows, take out the garbage, whatever my parents wanted. Then I decided, well, I'm going to be very clever. We were growing a lot of flowers in our yard. And I would start a flower stand outside our front gate, just like a little lemonade stand, only I'd sell flowers. And what I'd do is I'd pick every flower (laughs) that I could find in our yard, and I'd

put them in milk cartons and things like that. And then I decided, you know, the neighbors have some pretty good flowers, too. So I picked them as well.

Reti: (laughs) You'd sell them back to the neighbors?

Farr: So when the neighbors weren't looking, I was running around cutting flowers in their gardens. What I learned about human behavior is that when people came to buy flowers and felt sorry for this little kid, at this little flower stand, they always bought the ones they grew. (laughs) Maybe they knew I stole their flowers. But I put them in a flower arrangement, which they bought. So yeah, I always had a green thumb. In college, I always had plants in my room.

Reti: Did you use Miracle Gro and that kind of stuff?

Farr: No, I didn't use any of that stuff. I wouldn't even have thought of it. All those enhancements came along—

I remember also in the Peace Corps, I lived in a little tiny house, which had no backyard. We just had a porch. You'd kind of enter on this dirt street in the front, but then you'd walk out and it was built up over kind of a cliff. There was no house behind us. There was just a long foundation, maybe a twenty-five foot drop to the bottom of the slope, where the neighbors had a yard and had chickens and pigs. In fact, we'd just throw our garbage over our balcony and the animals would eat it all.

So I decided, this place needs some flowers. Downtown Medellín, where I was a Peace Corps volunteer, is the flower capital of the world. And there were always people selling orchid plants for nothing. You could buy a dozen orchid plants for

a peso. A peso was worth ten cents when I was there, so you could buy a dozen orchids for ten cents, almost a penny a piece.

Reti: Wow. Do they just grow wild in the forest?

Farr: They'd grow and then people would hybridize them. But because there were so many— So you'd buy these plants with broadleaf green, the old-fashioned orchid. But they didn't have any flowers on them. So I didn't know whether the plants were going to be beautiful, with big purple beautiful—all vibrant colors and everything. So I buy this big thing, come home on the bus, and find cartons and cans and plant them. And I don't know, it takes about six months for them to bloom, and they all had these long stems that came out. And they blossomed. And they were the tiniest little— I always thought orchids were big corsage-sized flowers. These were like the size of your fingernail, just white! You know, they were kind of cutesy, but (laughs) they're not orchids. They're not orchids. What are these things? (laughing)

Reti: (laughter)

Farr: And my roommate just laughed. He said, "You thought you were going to be this big orchid king, growing all these beautiful orchids." So I realized there's all kinds—there's hundreds of kinds of orchids. But anyway, yes, I've always had a green thumb. I could make things grow, even if I didn't know what they were going to be.

But anyway, I carried the organics bill in the assembly in 1990. Mark Lipson and his gang came to see me. I remember meeting them. I just got this really clear

feeling about it. It's sort of my Peace Corps coming out here. Here I am, this Peace Corps volunteer, and here are the natives. And they are coming to me and they want to create this legislation. And I'm just like a father: "Here, we'll write a bill. Tell me what's broken that needs fixing. They said, "We need to standardize the organic label. We have to have standardization and get the government involved in this to protect the organic label."

We wrote out the business requirements to be an organic grower. And out of that—I don't think I formed an organic caucus in Sacramento, but the bill passed in 1990. And it was quite a feat because we did it in one year, and launched the certified organic movement. Who knew that it was going to be as successful as it is today.

Working on Federal Organic Standards

What happened in that year of 1990, and I remember this very vividly—I was carrying the bill, and Alan Cranston, United States Senator, whom I knew—he was a friend of my father's—but we in the state legislature didn't directly interact very much with our federal counterparts. But he was going to be in Santa Cruz for some reason, at the University of California. And he wanted to meet me, with some growers, to talk about creating a federal bill like ours, modeled after the state. So we met on campus [at UCSC]. And he said Senator Leahy and he would be introducing a similar bill, modeled after our bill. And their bill also passed that year. But what happens at the federal level—the state level too—but at the federal level it's a lot longer. You have to write administrative regulations to carry out the provisions of statutory law.

So when I got to Washington in 1993, three years after the federal bill had been passed, they hadn't adopted the regulations yet. And that's timely, because it's very serious writing the rules. I kept asking, because I was on the Ag Committee, I went to the secretaries, and finally Secretary [Dan] Glickman, who had been on the Ag Committee with me and was defeated in a re-election campaign and was appointed by Clinton—he was very close to Leon [Panetta]. He was in Leon's class. And so Leon said, "Hey, this guy from Indiana, he knows a lot about agriculture. He's been on the Ag Committee, a senior member. Make him secretary of agriculture." Because [Mike] Espy, who had been the secretary of agriculture, had to resign for conflict of interest problems.

So Clinton appoints Glickman—and I'm on the Appropriations Committee now—and he comes before the Appropriations Committee as secretary. I said, "Mr. Secretary, I think we ought to remove your salary from the U.S. budget because you haven't adopted the organic standards yet. I hope you'll have them done as soon as possible." There had obviously been a lot of talk about it and there had been the committee set up to review these standards and to write them all out. So it wasn't as if I was suggesting something new. It was already in the works. They just weren't getting their job done because it was so controversial.

So he promised the committee that he'd get it done. And sure enough, by the end of the year, the standards were out. The first set of standards were so controversial, I think they had a record of 250,000 comments. Nobody had ever commented that much on any federal regulation. Kathleen Merrigan was chair of the committee and ended up becoming deputy director of agriculture under

Obama. Kathleen was really good at finally grinding out a compromise so that the standards could be developed.

Founding and Co-Chairing the Organic Caucus

Well, in that process, I think there was a lot of interest at the federal level, by other colleagues in Congress, so we decided, "Let's form a caucus." Caucuses are formed in Congress to essentially have a mailing list. Members need support for their issues. How do you get that support? Who cares about a subject matter? You've got 435 people, and when you go off and promote an idea, you don't have time or people to go around and figure all this out. Essentially, you raise the flag up the flagpole and say, "Who likes this flag? Who salutes it?" And you grab that list, call it a caucus. Now you've got a bunch of people who have a common interest. And you say, oh, my God, there's a couple of Republicans here, and Democrats who sit on the committee that I want to introduce this bill to. You go to them and say, "Why don't we put together a bill here as a team, as a caucus?" And when it gets to committee, you're on the inside. You can argue the merits of it. There are more caucuses than there are members of Congress. And some of them are just social caucuses, like they have a boot caucus and a cigar caucus.

Reti: (laughs) Seriously?

Farr: Oh, yeah. But you have serious caucuses, like the Black Caucus and the Hispanic Caucus, and so on, who actually have staff members to run the caucus, paid for by the members of the caucus.

So I've created a bunch of caucuses. I'm on the Travel and Tourism Caucus, who cares about the industry of travel and tourism. And I'm on the Defense Communities Caucus. I created that one. Those are communities like Monterey, that have a military base in them. How many of those communities out there care about BRAC and stuff like that. I think every disease has a caucus. Almost every country in the world has a caucus.

Reti: So do you actually meet?

Farr: No.

Reti: So it's a mailing list to garner support.

Farr: It depends on the energy of the caucus chair. Usually it's co-chaired by a Democrat and a Republican, because you want it to be that way. People have asked me to be on all kinds of caucuses because they get a newsletter saying, "Your member of Congress hasn't joined the Pancreatic Cancer Caucus yet." So somebody lobbying for that from the district will come and say, "We want you to join." And we have an old adage there, "Don't join a caucus until somebody asks you." So can you say, "Oh, yes. Thank you for asking." (laughs) So you join the caucus and tell your constituents that it is all because of them.

My chief of staff always discourages me. She says, "Every time you get on a caucus, I have to find a staff member to staff you." I said, "Why don't we just wait and see what they ask us, rather than trying to go out there and be the world's most knowledgeable person on this thing?" There is a resistance from the staff: "Oh, more work. For what?"

And on the other hand, I think it's a very effective tool. And as I'm leaving Congress, these caucuses that I've chaired for all these years—I'm beginning to see members come forward and say, "You know, I'd like to take your place. What do I have to do?" So that's good, because you know then that that subject matter, theme, in politics is going to be carried on.

The Farm Bill

Reti: Now, how often does the Farm Bill come up for renewal?

Farr: Well, it depends. Supposedly every five years. The theory with the federal government is that we rewrite— In local government and state government, we used to talk about sunseting bills. "We'll create it now but let's see how it works. And just to make sure that it doesn't become another bureaucracy, let's sunset it in five years." The problem with that is that when it gets to the decision of whether you sunset it, which means you just collapse it or get rid of it, nobody wants to do it then. "Well, how cost effective are you?" "Well, we don't know that yet?" "Oh, well, let's continue it along for another four years and we'll sunset it then. And in the meanwhile, maybe somebody can study it and tell us whether it's—" So sunsets are—I don't think they're a good tool. I think they're, frankly, very costly, because you spend more money trying to figure out whether to keep it going, than letting it die of its own accord, if it's really useless.

So anyway, these bills automatically have to go in the big bills, the Education Bill, and Defense Bill, all these bills have to come up for periodic review. And that's when you try to improve the law with reauthorization.

Reti: Because I know with the Farm Bill—the support for organic research; the subsidy for organic certification during the transition period; and other costs having to do with being an organic farmer—I know you’ve worked with Bob Scowcroft and other people from the Organic Farming Research Foundation who’ve come to Washington to help the Farm Bill address some of the issues that have come up for organic agriculture over the last twenty years.

Farr: You know a lot about this subject matter; thank you for being smart. Your question is a good one. When you write a bill you just sort of say—I mean, think of it as a school: “Let’s create a band.” “Well, how big is the band? Do you want to have an orchestra? Are you going to have a choir? Is it a jazz band, a marching band? What are you going to have?” So you have to describe all that. You set out the rules for the band, right? And then you say, “Okay, those are law. Now we can legally do it.” “Well, if we’re going to do all this, these things are all going to cost money.” “Well, that’s not our job, that is the finance office, which in this case is the appropriations bill.” But before the Appropriations Committee can decide how much money to put in it, somebody has to create the subject matter about how we are going to create the band.

So, the Farm Bill is essentially that: these are all the ingredients in farming practices in America, which the federal government is involved in. It is really diverse. And so the Farm Bill sets up not only authorizing that we’re going to have commodity programs to cover the differences between market value and a failed market for wheat, corn, soybeans, and so on—and they put a cap on expenditures. It’s an upper limit authorized to spend on this or that. And then it’s up to the Appropriations Committee to put that money in the account, up to

the cap. But we don't have to. The Appropriations Committee is going to have a separate argument, sort of checks and balances: is this necessary at all? Is it being effective? Maybe we ought to put *more* money in there? Maybe we should take money away. Maybe we shouldn't put any money there. That's the debate that goes on on Appropriations Committee

So all these things are kind of up in the air all the time. And just because there is a sunset or a failed reauthorization— I'll give you an example. Many years ago the National Endowment for the Arts was under incredible criticism by the right wing because they had nudity, or something was offensive in religious senses, or whatever. And people felt no taxpayer should be supporting the arts. We should get out of the arts. They wouldn't allow Congress—we didn't have the votes—to reauthorize the National Endowment for the Arts. And to my knowledge, it hasn't been reauthorized since. But we had the institution and we had people working there. We have put money up, although you're not supposed to put money up for something that isn't authorized. So this is an exception to the rule. We can't kill it and we're going to keep it going, but we're not growing it, or embracing it as much as we ought to be doing in a country like America. So programs very—if they're not authorized theoretically they die. But they don't, as long as you give them some money.

So the Farm Bill doesn't always get passed on time. And people all go nuts. Oh, God. What's going to happen? But we eventually get around to it. And Farm Bills are always controversial, but always in the end, pass. I always made sure that specialty crops of California had their place in the bill, along with social programs like food stamps, WIC, and conservation easements.

Fair Trade Sustainable Coffee

Reti: So you were also involved with Fair Trade sustainable coffee.

Farr: (laughs) Oh, yeah. I forgot about that. Well, one of my staff members, who was covering international legislation took this interest— You know, I'd been a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, and Colombia is Mr. Coffee, right?

Reti: Oh, yeah.

Farr: And I remember a lot of the Colombians were telling me, "If you really want to help this country, it's not foreign aid money that would help us. If you could just get Americans to pay one penny more for coffee, it would skyrocket the economy. Because it's not a corporate; it's not a big, large crop. It's a lot of campesino farmers growing these coffee beans on the edge, and that money then is dispersed." I mean, they made a damn good argument. Of course, I didn't understand anything about coffee prices and stuff like that at the time I was in the Peace Corps, but I learned fast in Congress. I didn't even know there was a world coffee exchange. In fact, in international markets, there is an actual— because Colombian coffee is always thought to be of higher quality, there is a title for just Colombian Supreme.

So on the Appropriations Committee, there was a congressman from South Carolina, [Cass] Ballenger. He was a conservative businessman, but he'd worked with his church and he'd worked with nonprofits. He'd made a lot of money in the school furniture business, building desks and things like that. Before he got into Congress, he made a lot of trips to Central America, and had adopted

schools and sent them furniture free, or even countries. He was really into helping people who needed a lot of help.

He started leading trips to Central and South America—Venezuela and Colombia—and so on. And the big plea from these countries was, “Help us with our coffee.” And the question was, “Well, what can we do.” And they said, “You know, America ought to get back into the coffee exchange board. “We don’t grow coffee except for Kona coffee in Hawaii.” That’s certainly such a small amount that it didn’t warrant us joining in. The State Department was against it. It was a cost. I don’t know, there was just a lot of pushback. But Ballenger, who was a Republican, was very interested. He said, “This makes sense.”

So I had a staff member who really picked that up and he had me meeting with a lot of these coffee growers on coffee issues. Actually, UC Santa Cruz got involved because Steve Gliessman was teaching a course, where a lot of his graduate students were going down to Central America and trying to help the coffee growers upgrade their skills, and at the same time develop direct marketing, where you could buy coffee from the grower in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and so on, Costa Rica.^{xiii} So a lot of this new idea of direct marketing was happening right here in my backyard.

I didn’t really understand the value of getting America back into being on the International Coffee Organization, the council of leading countries. And the point was that this council could influence quality and price.^{xiii}

Here’s what happened, and why the coffee crisis occurred. Post-Vietnam War, we were trying to help the country get back on its feet (and it’s an agrarian

country) it was suggested—what crops could Vietnam grow that we could get into the international market? Obviously, they grow rice. But they wanted to get into a more diversified agricultural economy. And some bright person in USAID said, “You know, you have the microclimate here to grow coffee.” I don’t think the Vietnamese had ever drunk a cup of coffee, so it wasn’t that they were interested in coffee, *per se*, but it was interesting in—oh, my God, we could grow a crop and sell it.

So they grew coffee like mad because they had a lot of cheap labor and they could do a lot. Only they didn’t grow very good quality coffee. Now, what happens to the price in the market when cheap, poor quality Vietnamese coffee floods the market? Bad coffee was all right on the market, as long as it was bought for flavorings, like making coffee ice cream, or coffee candies, or whatever it is. Flavoring doesn’t need high quality. But to drink a cup of coffee—So Vietnamese coffee just made the market crash. Growers couldn’t even get a breakeven price for their coffee.

That’s when Steve Gliessman and others said, “Look,” because these guys were screaming and saying, “We’re growing really good coffee and we’re doing it all with manual labor, but we can’t even get a good price for it. We can’t get a price to cover our costs,” so his idea was creating an alternative market for Central American quality coffee growers. His students, working alongside the campesinos, would send home a request for four or five hundred bucks from a relative or NGO organization, and that allowed the coffee growers association to buy and make their own roaster. Now farmers could harvest, roast, and sell directly to American consumers.

[recording interrupted by text message from Farr's chief of staff]

Congressman Cass Ballenger (unfortunately he passed away), he had a hearing on it, where they brought in all this poor-quality coffee, and he told the story of essentially why it was important for America to get back into this world coffee organization if we really wanted to sustain the countries that we were trying to help in Central America, and South America, and even in Africa. I mean, coffee was born in Africa. Ethiopia was the country that initiated the coffee crops.

The turning point was that President Bush went to Africa on an African trade mission-type thing. That's what presidents do. And when he got back, his staff told Cass Ballenger the one thing that President Bush was asked more than anything else was, "When is America going to get back into the coffee board?" He'd never heard of it, "The coffee council?" He said, "The president wants us back in," even though the State Department was against it. So with Cass Ballenger, the Republican leadership, and Sam Farr, the cheerleader, putting all the legislation together and things like that, we passed a resolution getting us back into the international coffee coalition.

And you know what? It has proven to be nothing but positive ever since. It was just sort of this attitude sometimes that some of our folks have, "Oh, we don't have to pay any attention to that because we don't grow coffee." I always argued—I said, "If this were corn or wheat, and we had all these competitors around the country and we wanted a good price, we would be in there. We'd be in there in a quick moment. We'd probably be trying to chair the whole thing and be the leader in it." But just saying, "Well, we don't grow coffee." But the point is

that what you set in these commissions are quality standards. And that's what Central America and South America wanted, was the fact that if you can set these quality standards globally, then we have a chance to compete, because our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere have a higher standard and more value, and therefore it's going to cost you more for Colombian Supremo than it will for Vietnamese Crude.

Reti: I've never heard of Vietnamese coffee, I've got to say. (laughs)

Farr: The fair trade stuff was also being pushed at that time, and frankly I give that credit to Nancy Pelosi, who changed the cafeteria in the House, in the Congressional building's cafeterias, to essentially go green. We had nothing but Styrofoam and plastics. Even other federal agencies were moving towards renewables and recyclables. Nancy Pelosi ordered, as Speaker of the House, to get the contractors to have everything meet these green standards—fair trade coffee, and recyclables, and so on. The minute that she lost, and John Boehner and the Republicans took over, they canceled all of that.

Reti: Back to Styrofoam? (laughs)

Farr: Back to Styrofoam. They didn't care about fair trade coffee, dropped fair trade, all that. So the only way we can get all that back is to elect the Democrats as the majority, so that they can control the rules of the cafeteria and purchasing powers of the House for millions of dollars of supplies. Congress should set an example for the country. Nancy Pelosi did. Paul Ryan doesn't.

So that was all going on. And again, Santa Cruz played— I mean, the way I got involved with this— A lot of this nobody knows about, I mean, nobody in Congress was talking about it. But you come home and they're all talking about it. Bert Muhly was doing fair trade coffee here.^{xiv} "We're going to only support countries and only support coffee that is fair trade." The politics of that has worked because you now hear Starbucks and all the big vendors bragging about having fair trade coffee. So I always think that those grassroots passions can really change the marketplace because of the power of the almighty dollar, which the consumer owns, not the companies. Santa Cruz is a model for putting its taxpayer dollars in green products and working with local industry to sell products that meet green standards, are good for local business, and the whole community. Put your money where your values lie. I wish Congress would do the same.

NAFTA and the Cut Flower Industry

Reti: So tell me about your work with cut flowers and NAFTA.

Farr: Well, cut flowers are a very interesting issue because when I was in the California Legislature, I was asked by a lot of the flower growers here in the Pajaro Valley to create a marketing order (that's the technical term) for the Cut Flower Association. What essentially you do is you pass legislation allowing the growers to organize themselves. You've given them the framework to organize in what they call the marketing order, which means that if they so choose to form an assessment formula for themselves, to tax themselves, that money stays in their budget and the state of California holds it as the bank, a treasury. And it's

an enforceable assessment, so if you don't pay it, your assets can be attached. But the association makes the decision, and how much each member has to pay, in terms of a fee, is determined by the size of the business, or a lot of things. They create the standards for what they can use that money for; it could be market promotion, advertising, fighting lawsuits, etc. That's where you get the marketing order—like advertising for their crop.

Reti: So, like the Strawberry Commission.

Farr: Yes, the Strawberry Commission has a marketing order, and so do almost all the specialty crops. Probably the best known in our area was when the California Raisin Grape Association, not wine grapes, raisin grapes, created the—remember the ads for the Dancing Raisins?

Reti: Oh, right.

Farr: They came up with the songs. Those characters were so cute, people wanted to buy them. Then they started commercializing the characters. You could buy them as dolls.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And the song was so popular, it almost got into the mainstream media. Anyway, what they ended up with was an advertisement that was so successful that they sold that whole thing and made a lot of money. That's an unusual example of what marketing orders can do for a specialty crop. I forget how the song went?

Reti: I don't watch a lot of TV but I know what you're talking about.

Farr: So Cut Flowers came to me and said, "We want to do this just like the Artichoke Board and the Lettuce Board and Milk Board and all those." So I carried the legislation to create a cut flower marketing order and that's how I got interested in cut flowers. I was telling you that I've always been a hobbyist flower grower.

Reti: Yeah.

Farr: But I had no idea how big the industry was around here, both in the Salinas Valley and in the Pajaro Valley. At the same time as I was running for Congress, I learned the reason why they wanted to form a marketing order is they wanted to be able to go into court and sue the Colombians for dumping cut flowers into the U.S. market. The Colombians, probably with some help from some smart Peace Corps volunteer, (laughs) or USAID, said, "You guys have the microclimate to grow flowers. You grow more flowers naturally—orchid capital of the world and so on, than anybody else. Why don't you really create an industry of cut flowers? And your proximity to Miami will just send jet loads of flowers every day."

Well, it got to be so huge that 747 cargo planes were just filled with flowers. I don't know how many times a day they went up, but the U.S. markets were flooded. Colombians were smart. They went around to all the grocery stores and outlet markets and said, "We'll provide you with flowers." You could never buy flowers at Safeway when you were young. They didn't even have them. Or in all these other stores, restaurants and places like that. The U.S. floral industry was

always with florists; it was a closed industry. No one thought to use grocery stores as flower stores until the Colombians made it happen. Shoppers were supposed to buy flowers from florists, not grocery stores. Well, it's convenient. While you are buying bananas, why not buy fresh flowers?

So the Colombians did extremely well and just wiped out the domestic market. And our area was one of the biggest producers of cut flowers in all the greenhouses in the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys.

So, I got into the struggle, not only having created the marketing order for California flower growers, but I happened to be a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia and my Colombian ex-girlfriend's sister's husband (we're all still very close) ends up being the president of the Colombian flower growers association in Medellín, Colombia, where I was stationed.

So I'm saying to my Colombian friends, "You guys are killing my growers," and they're saying, "Well, you know, that's just free enterprise. You guys told us how to do this." Well, like all professions they do have international association meetings of flower growers, or cattle operators, or whatever. And they happened to have that meeting one year in Monterey. So, like any association meeting, the Colombians come through here and they see all the growing practices here in the Pajaro Valley. And they would take their guys down and show them their operation. Of course, they have much cheaper labor and less regulation in Colombia.

So I hosted a party for my friends from Colombia and for the leadership of the Pajaro Valley. And at that cocktail party, at my father's house in Carmel, I

remember I said, “Can’t we solve this lawsuit battle?” Because the Colombians said, “You guys are making us spend so much money on hiring lawyers to fight your anti-dumping lawsuits. And you never win. We both lose. You spend a lot of money on lawyers losing. We spend a lot of money on lawyers winning. And we don’t need to do that. We’re all in the same business. Why don’t we work out something? You know what the problem is? Americans don’t buy enough flowers. Europeans, per capita, buy a lot more flowers. Other countries in the world buy a lot more flowers per capita. What you need is to get a marketing order. We’ve got to market flowers. Who cares whether it’s a Colombian flower or an American flower, if people are buying more flowers? A rising tide will help us both.”

So the Americans said, “Well, why should we do that? We have to spend more. You don’t put anything up to help? No deal.”

And the Colombians said, “What we’ll do, if you’ll stop filing anti-dumping suits on us, we’ll pay the entire cost of this American marketing order.” And that was done over cocktails at my sister’s house. They shook on it and then they went back and wrote all the regulations to do that.

And what our flower growers started doing is they said, “Okay, we can’t compete with the Colombians. They beat us on roses. They beat us on daisies. They beat us on carnations. They beat us on chrysanthemums—all these value-added flowers that were very popular in California. We’ll start growing nursery stock. And the irony is that probably the biggest orchid grower in the country is Andy Matsui in Monterey County.^{xv} And Andy Matsui had started off growing

chrysanthemums, selling them to the Japanese market because it is a big, favorite flower in Japan, and gotten wiped out by the Colombians. He said, "I don't know anything. I'm not educated and all that. I grow flowers." So he said, "Ah, I'm going to grow roses." So he really gets into learning how to grow roses. A wonderful, beautiful rose grower. The Colombians come in and wipe him out. He goes bankrupt. He's living over in a mobile home with his wife outside of Salinas, trying to get these operations going. He's raising his family. His oldest daughter comes home one day, she's graduating from Salinas High School, and says, "Papa, I got accepted to a university." Nobody in his family had gone to school and he said, "That's really great." She says, "Papa, I got accepted to Harvard." And he says, "Is that a good one?" (chuckles)

Reti: Aw.

Farr: She said, "Dad, it's the best. And guess what? They're going to pay for my scholarship." (chokes up) Andy Matsui now provides about forty scholarships a year to kids—full pay—like 40K each. He's the biggest orchid grower in the country. And he grew orchids because he said, "I know something that the Colombians can't beat me on. Their own flower! They're the orchid capital of the world, but they can't send an orchid in here because it has to come in a pot." Because of soil. We don't want contaminated soil, so we don't allow imported potted plants in America.

Reti: So all those little potted orchids that you find at Costco or Trader Joe's—

Farr: Those are all grown by Andy Matsui.

So this flower thing has really been something that I've been involved in. I love the industry. Even took it to the White House. Because the flower growers said, "You know, Sam, President Reagan started this tradition of serving nothing but American food stuff inside the White House, at all these state dinners." They used to serve French wines and everything. And Reagan came from California and the wine grape growers here—and actually, there's a story behind that. There's a high-end market in Sacramento, and when the Reagans lived there, Mike Deaver, his chief of staff, was always buying wine for the governor. And when he got back to Washington, as chief of staff, Mike said, "Let's have that store provide wines for the White House, but we only want California wines. Get us the best." And then the beef growers came and said, "You've got to serve American beef, American pork, American eggs, American chicken." Everything in the White House has traditionally been American, except the flowers that decorate the White House every day and the flowers that are on all the tables. It's a big, big deal. There's a huge thing about flowers at the White House.

So I went to the president, when we were on Air Force One. I said, "Mr. President," he didn't know anything about it, "You've got to start buying American flowers." He says, "It sounds good to me." So he tells somebody on his staff to look into it: "Crazy Congressman Farr wants us to buy American flowers."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: And they push back, "Oh, no. We have a florist. We don't micromanage her shop." I said, "You have a chef, too, and she buys American food stuff." Now the

big floral arrangements in the White House are American flowers. And that all came out of our wonderful flower growers here on the Central Coast.

See, I think we can bring it all home and stimulate the rural economy by creating these rural experiences in America. We need to promote farm visits and stuff like that, but I mean, really ratchet it up. If the agricultural industry in the Pajaro Valley, and all of the farms they have—the Gizdich Ranch and all those, and the flower sheds. There are so many of them there and they all have different kinds. There is so much color and beauty. The list goes on and on: apples from Martinelli's—

I mean, you could create an experience that would be really hot. It would be sort of like the Disneyland of rural agriculture in California. And you go to all those hotels in Monterey, who are trying to keep people in the hotel another night. Hotel owners would love it. "Hey, we've got an idea of how your customers can spend another night." Santa Cruz could reach out to Monterey to bring tourists north, until someday Santa Cruz builds more hotels. Bring your kids, and along the way maybe you'll stop at Elkhorn Slough, and take them on a surfing safari, and in the afternoon, you can go up to the Boardwalk and play on the Boardwalk." A rising tide will help both sides.

I think a lot of this stuff in agriculture is so exciting and so dramatic. Because it all began here. This flower struggle that a whole nation is benefitting from started in the Pajaro Valley.

Reti: With the loss of the flower industry.

Farr: See, what makes this area—like I asked Andy Matsui, I said, “Well, how can you grow orchids?” I always thought it was a tropical, hot, steamy jungle where you grow orchids. And he said, “All flowers have to be grown in controlled conditions. So you have to maintain some standards, either by heating or cooling. Those are huge costs. But the wonderful thing about the greenhouses in the Salinas Valley is that if it’s a little bit cold, you don’t need much heat to warm them up a bit, close the windows. And if it does get too warm, you don’t need air conditioners. You just open a window. So energy costs are low here because you don’t need heating and cooling like in so many other areas.

Reti: So that temperate climate makes it possible.

Farr: So we have the ability to compete in these temperate zones with the least cost of energy, and that’s why we can be competitive with other countries and other parts of the United States.

Reti: I see.

Farr: And he said, “With orchids—yeah, we keep our greenhouses warm, but it’s not that costly here compared to other parts. For orchids to bloom, they have to be cooled down. So when it gets to the point when they’re going to bloom, we just open the windows, and let the cold air in, the evening air.” So it’s just smart science in how our growers use our microclimate to grow almost everything.

Reti: Just using where you are.

Farr: You use the environment to be your best asset. Yeah.

Organic farming, the same way. We've got these microclimates that can grow so many different crops. I think what's going to happen in the organic world is you're going to get your big chains in there, your huge corporate chains that will be contracting with growers to grow to organic standards. And they'll market them like they market other things. But you're still going to have this niche, where these restaurants and grocery stores and farmer's markets should be able to sustain the growers in this community who can't grow enough to meet that big corporate demand. And so, just like we've seen in the wine industry—you know, you have these bottlers who can put out a million bottles of wine, but you still have the small vintner who puts out hundreds of cases of wine and can make it because they've got a value-added and people are willing to pay more for it.

So I don't think it's a win or lose. I think some people in the organic movement think that they're going to be wiped out by all these corporate people. And I think that the corporate people move that way once they see the economics of it. Look what putting lettuce in a bag did to the value of lettuce. It also created less waste because you can use the leaves of an ugly head of lettuce, where the head can't be perfect and wouldn't sell, but can now be used for lettuce in a bag. By packaging lettuce in a bag, that head of lettuce doesn't have to be perfect to be shipped to a grocery store in San Francisco or New York, so that the consumer looking at these bunch of lettuces isn't going to pick out the ugly odd one. But the ugly, odd one can be a lettuce in a bag. There is a lot of waste left in the field because the fruit or vegetable is not cosmetically perfect. Nobody buys fruits

with spots on them anymore. In the old days, you'd take them home and cut out the spot and eat the apple.

Reti: Right.

Farr: Or even cut out the worm, you know.

Reti: Yeah, my mom used to do that.

Farr: (laughs) Nobody sees that anymore. So agricultural marketing is always evolving.

Agri-Tourism

Look at what Hershey's, Pennsylvania has done in making Hershey bars and dominating the chocolate world. I guess nobody can really make a dent into Hershey because they've got such dominance. But what's so exciting, is the town of Hershey has this whole theme park, which is basically around the chocolate factory, where you get tours of the factory. So why don't we do that here with berries, with Driscoll's, and have everything you can do with berries, and have you see how they're grown and harvested. And then you can go taste a bunch of them and then you can make a bunch of pies and ice creams or whatever.

Reti: Yeah! Have you been to Pie Ranch?^{xvi}

Farr: Where?

Reti: Oh, you've got to go there. They do that there.

Farr: I've been to Gizdich Ranch, Nita Gizdich's ranch. I took my staff there for a staff retreat, and we sat in that little barn there and ordered a bunch of pies and ate them. And she made them and she told us about the history of all the different apples in the Pajaro Valley.

So my politics has really been driven by the niches of what we do well here. And being involved in tourism is essentially: how do we get people in here? I learned a lot about tourism, when I got interested in helping the state realize the state's biggest industry.

I've been against urban sprawl, fighting to keep our valley cities from sprawling out. And yet, you want growth. Well, these rural communities—you destroy them by having them sprawl out. They lose all their character and identity if they're just one big, huge massive town, each surrounded by nothing but other urban stuff. So how do you keep small, rural towns going? Well, you bring the tourists in here and tax the tourists and spend it on the locals. The quality of life goes up for us and they go home. So how do you build that up and spread it around? You get people to go where they haven't been going. Like, how do we get people out of the Monterey Peninsula, into the Pajaro Valley, or to the Boardwalk, or up into the Bonny Doon area, and up in the redwoods. I think if we start thinking about selling the whole region—think regionally, act locally, we would have a growing economy without sacrificing our beautiful place.

And frankly, as a politician, I've learned that people understand this stuff when they get out and get exposed to it. I can see a lot of this in Big Sur, people driving through there because it's a place on the map. And all of a sudden, it's no longer

a place on the map. It's reality and it's like incredibly beautiful and they're just flocking to every turnout and looking. They're seeing sea otters and they're seeing whales. And they're saying, "Oh, my God. This is phenomenal. Look at these mountains!"

And they want to know, "Why haven't you built houses all over here?" And you say, "Well, you know, this is private land. We do this through master planning and zoning. And we do this through foundations like the Big Sur Land Trust." You don't ask them for a contribution, but at that point you can say, "You know, if you want to keep it this way, help support the institutions that do that." To me, that's where the political education comes in. Because then when I introduce a bill to save Big Sur, other members of Congress say, "Yeah, I was there and I want to save Big Sur too." That's how you get votes. Exposing urban people to rural areas—its people, culture, produce, and wildlife—can help the rural economy without paving it over.

I remember going with a bunch of members of Congress to Siena, Italy. And the town was an ancient town and just looks like an ancient town, beautiful. And I was asking some of the villagers, "Well, how do you sustain this town? You've done it for a thousand years."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: They said, "We have so many regulations. You can't paint your shutters. You can't change a window. Everything is controlled: colors, size, shape. We all accept it because that's what brings these gazillion tourists here, spending money, and so we have to put up with tough rules and regulations regarding the

outside aesthetics of our home. Inside the house, nobody cares. We've got big satellite TV's and stuff like that. But outside, it's got to maintain the historic look."

Electeds learn from that, from exposure to other solutions to problems. Hopefully electeds have a constituency that understands what they're saying. Because without it, it's just one crazy idea. "That's a wild and crazy idea but nobody will ever do anything about that. I won't support it. I never heard of it before." So I find the challenges for a lot of the California cutting-edge issues are really about building a critical mass of people who get it and will then do something to push the politics to solve it.

Reti: Okay, I think that's a good place to stop for today.

Farr: That's what the organic kids did.

Reti: That's what they do and you're going to go celebrate with them now.

Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act of 2002

Reti: This is Irene Reti. And today is September 1, 2016. I'm here with Sam Farr. We're back at Dave Potter's office and we're going for our seventh interview today.

Farr: Wow.

Reti: And we have a good portion of the day to explore history, Sam, so that's really great. So I wanted to, first of all, pick up a little piece of legislation, going back to 2002, that you briefly mentioned yesterday. I want to go through the

Bush era and that early 2000s period, and then we'll move forward from there. And that was the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act of 2002, which I believe helped prevent oil drilling in Big Sur?

Farr: Los Padres National Forest goes from Carmel Valley to Los Angeles, not all connected, but in the Monterey division inside Monterey County, its best part—Leon [Panetta] made some of it a wilderness. Such a designation is the highest protection you can give to publicly owned lands. Essentially, wilderness designation says it's going to be left as wilderness—no roads; essentially mankind can enter the wilderness in a passive manner. And the maintenance of that should also be in a relatively passive manner. So you avoid machines, like chainsaws, and all-terrain vehicles, and off-road motorcycles, and those kinds of things. And obviously, no roads. So for hiking and for trail maintenance you have to use hand tools, even hand saws.

Reti: In the Los Padres National Forest—

Farr: Well, in the designated wilderness.^{xvii} We did make some exceptions for fire lines that we built because those were already there, so we historically preserved them. Because you're not really allowed even to cut into—if there's a fire, like we have a fire here [right now], federal law allows for exceptions, like bulldozing or cutting fire lines without the president's waiver. Some people, when they don't like wilderness, will raise that: "You can't do anything. It will burn down your house and nobody cares." But that's just B. S.— Anyway, we didn't make it that sort of wilderness, the hardest line you can take.

We created the Silver Peak Wilderness area with my legislation. We expanded some of the Los Padres and then created a new area, which is in South Monterey County and Northern San Luis Obispo County. What they call the Monterey Division ends there, and then it picks up pieces in San Luis Obispo County and in Santa Barbara County, a lot of it in Santa Barbara, in the mountains. And then down through Ventura [County] and all the way into LA County. So it's an interesting national forest. It starts in Carmel Valley and ends up outside of Los Angeles. It's not one big long linear thing.

Reti: This is Los Padres National Forest?

Farr: Yeah. It used to be called the Santa Barbara National Forest, ancient times ago. It's one of the few, or maybe the only national forest in California that goes right to the ocean, that has ocean frontage. And down in what they call South Big Sur, around Kirk Creek, they have a Forest Service campground. And then they have other Forest Service campgrounds on the Nacimiento-Fergusson Road, which is the only road that goes from the Coast Highway 1, over to Highway 101, through Camp Hunter Liggett. And that road is not inside the national forest. So the Silver Peak is sort of south of Nacimiento, and the Los Padres Wilderness is north of Nacimiento Road.

So anyway, only Congress can make wilderness. (laughs) That was my one bill, that the way it turned out the bill never had a hearing, never had a vote, and yet got adopted as law. And I'll tell you the story behind it.

So what happened is that, Congressman Hansen was chair, Republican chair of the Resources Committee. And my bill, when I introduced it, was referred to his

committee, his jurisdiction, for creating wilderness. His staff worked with my staff, and he said, "We're a little bit concerned because this forest and the wilderness area is right on the edge of Fort Hunter Liggett, a big military reservation." Republicans don't generally like to do wilderness bills, or park bills, or things like that. So he was reluctant to hear the bill and act on it, until he got assurances in writing from the Department of the Army that this was not going to jeopardize the maneuvers of Fort Hunter Liggett. And, in fact, the Forest Service had an agreement where they can partner, if need be. And with that, he said, "You worked hard on this bill, and as long as there's no opposition and the military doesn't mind, we'll support your bill."

So these bills that are essentially not for the whole nation, and are non-controversial, and are district bills are put on what they call a consent calendar. In local government they call it a consent calendar and in state government they call it a consent calendar. In Washington, they call it a suspension calendar, meaning that they have to pass with a two-thirds vote but there normally isn't a debate about them.

So what happened is the Congressional year was winding down and the days are numbered, and my bill hasn't come out of committee. So I go to Mr. Hansen, who is going to retire (this is going to be his last night or last few days in Congress). And I just said, "You know, Mr. Chairman, you promised this bill would come to the floor. This really isn't fair, to renege on your promise. I mean, we've got only a couple of days left. What's going on?" "Oh, my God," he says. "I promised you I'd bring that bill to the floor." He calls his staff and he says, "I

want that bill brought down and put on the suspension calendar on the floor right now." So his staff did that.

The suspension calendar was controlled by the Republican leadership. Dick Armey was the majority leader. And I don't know what the issues were—his staff didn't like me, or they didn't want another Democratic bill. And so here's where I kind of pulled a Rumpelstiltskin—

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: You can only do this once in a while, but you can do it. So I said, "Look, Mr. Hansen promised me a vote on this bill. The suspension calendar is the only calendar we're going to be dealing with. And if you don't put my bill on there, I will block all the others." Because they are all taken up the last night of session—these sort of must-pass, noncontroversial bills. Most people have gone home. To pass all the bills on the suspension calendar, it takes a unanimous vote without "objection." Essentially, they do it without objection. So that means if somebody objects, it just kills them all. So I said, "I'll sit on this floor all night, until the session ends. I'm going to object on every one of these bills. So you're willing to kill every congressman's bill. You'll be the most disliked guy in Congress. Just dare me. I've really got a passion about this and I feel I really got screwed. I'll do it. I'll kill them all."

So Dick Armey thought, my god, we can't afford to lose all these other bills. Whatever all the internal politics were, it wasn't worth Farr just ruining the day for so many people.

Reti: Wow. (laughs)

Farr: So they bring the suspension calendar out on the floor. All these bills there go right up for a roll call vote, without objection. "All in favor say aye-aye," and the bill passes. They did that for about a dozen bills and then they all are sent over to the Senate.

So it was just fortuitous that the House adjourned that night but the Senate was still going to be in session for about a week. I don't remember that we do this very often, only when one House stays in session after the other has adjourned. So I, immediately, that morning, called Barbara Boxer. Barbara is wonderful because she just jumps on things. I said, "Barbara, I sent over a bill over there last night. It passed the House unanimously." (Nobody had voted because we'd all gone home.") You don't vote when they have an oral—it's just yays and nays. I said, "Nobody objected to it." She said, "Well, I'll hold it at the desk and then I'll go to the chairman of the committee and we'll take it up." I said, "We've only got a couple of days." She said, "Don't worry. I can get this done." She's fantastic at it.

So the House was adjourned and gone home for the year and Barbara gets the bill and gets it passed. It goes to the president. So it hasn't had a hearing. (laughs) I mean, nobody knows this. I'm just telling you now. But it didn't have a hearing in the House. It didn't actually have a vote on the floor. It didn't have a hearing in the Senate and it didn't have a vote in the Senate. It just passed unanimously and went to the president.

And then, something just politically—I have to say to the people that did this that it was probably the most stupid thing anybody politically could do—the only letter—the White House calls me and says, “The president is interested in your bill and will sign it. But we’re just curious. He got a letter from the Monterey County Farm Bureau asking us to veto the bill.” Well, farm bureaus, in general, just don’t support any acquisition of public lands or upgrading of public lands. They think it’s going to stop them from cattle grazing, or whatever they’ve been doing in national forests. This was a national forest area where there weren’t any cattle. It was just too steep. But of all things for the Farm Bureau from my own district—and they hadn’t sent a letter to anybody before. Had they done that earlier, maybe they might have had an effect, but at the last minute after it had passed both houses, was an act of stupidity.

I called the Farm Bureau president and I said, “I don’t think you’re politically very smart. You know, I’m the only Californian on the Appropriations Committee. I’m the only Westerner on the Ag Appropriations Committee. Every single thing that happens in agriculture goes through this committee. And you want to piss off your own congressman, who has been a big friend of agriculture in Monterey County by telling the president to veto a bill that nobody else opposes, and in fact has the support of even the military around here.” They just were totally stupid. I mean, the White House ignored it. And they wrote it at the last minute and everything and never told me, which is just discourteous. But anyway, that was the bill that expanded that wilderness at the southern portion of Los Padres National Forest in Monterey County.

And today, we still have a few people who are still very critical because they think that all these Big Sur fires would have been stopped if we didn't have the wilderness designation. What they fail to understand is that in the legislation we grandfathered in the historic fire breaks. And what we learned from the Forest Service, is that a lot of the old breaks weren't effective. They wouldn't use them again. They are there and they are scars, but they're not going to continue to open them up. This area that is affected by these fires that are burning right now is so rugged that they wouldn't put people in there anyway. Geographically, Big Sur is a very difficult place to fight fires. If you look at the mosaic of all of these ridges and valleys, they have a big, huge rumpling affect. There is no way to cut a line. It's too steep and you can't go straight. And you can't just keep doing this catawampus line. You can't get the equipment in there. It's too steep for the equipment and too difficult to get in. And you can't even get hand crews. It's too steep. So the collective wisdom is to let it burn—burning is good for the forest.

So that's why they're allowing this [Sobreranes] fire to burn and they are hoping it burns itself out. They are essentially fighting this fire from the air, in the wilderness area, by just dropping water and retardant on it, and hoping that the climatic conditions will—the fire is burning very slowly and will just burn itself out. If it keeps moving—and it's been moving for weeks now—but if it does get closer to where the lines are, then they'll back fire, but they don't want to back fire now because they would be lighting a huge fire that could reverse on them and jump the lines.

So the wilderness can, when fires are burning, create a lot of unrest with people who don't understand that it's not really the designation. It's the geography of the terrain that makes accessibility too difficult.

What we're trying to do in Monterey County, is we're trying to preserve all those Big Sur mountains and valleys and keep them in a natural state. They are really historically significant. When the explorers, the Spanish explorers, were coming up the coast, and the first people to come by land got up to San Carpoforo Creek, which is right above where Hearst Castle is now, in San Simeon, they went into the mountains trying to find a way to go up the Big Sur coastline. And the soldiers and explorers after a few days turned back. They said, "It's just impenetrable. We can't get in there. Let's go around them." And that's why all the missions had been established along the coast, except for San Antonio Mission at Fort Hunger Liggett, and Soledad Mission, in Soledad. That was because the parties went around the Santa Lucia mountain range. The Santa Lucias, according to historian Sandy Lydon, were named that because the Spaniards sailed up the coast on Saint Lucia's Day. The Spanish named those mountains a long time ago, and it is what we call the Big Sur, or the Los Padres National Forest. I'm very proud to have been able to permanently put that in protected status.

Reti: Yes. Well, since we're on that topic. I know that there is Garrapata State Park and several other state parks that you've helped create.

Farr: Well, Garrapata was while I was in the state legislature and Jerry Brown was governor. Alan Sieroty from LA was chair of the Resources Committee and

Peter Douglas was executive director of the Coastal Commission. Peter, and a guy named Bill Kier, who was with the Senate Office of Research, took an Easter break. And their job was to drive up the California coastline and make recommendations to the State Legislature of properties that should be acquired.

Reti: Wow, what a great job! I want that job.

Farr: What a great job. (chuckles) “Look, shall we make this a park?” So Peter put into his memo to the legislature, Garrapata, which was owned by the Doud family here. Mrs. Doud, Anita Doud, had died. And her estate owed the state a lot of money. We tried to just get a swap, where the land could be used in lieu of paying state inheritance taxes. The state tax has since been eliminated by initiative. But the state had no mechanism where you could just switch out. So essentially, I think the estate had to pay the taxes and then the state turned around and gave the taxes to family by buying the land.

And it’s an unimproved property. There’s a lot of interesting—I mean, every land acquisition in Big Sur has a political story behind it, as well as in Santa Cruz. I think the Central Coast of California, being some of the oldest settled land in California, it’s still very controversial as to who buys it and what money they use and what the restrictions are on it. Because there are all kinds of ownerships of land other than private ownership. There are land trusts that own land. The state owns land that is in state parks. The federal government owns land that is in the national forest, in wilderness status. You still have private lots inside the wilderness. They are what they call inholdings. And the question is how valuable they are. They’re just squares on a map, tiny squares, or

rectangular pieces, depending on how many acres are in there. You can't build a road because it's in the wilderness, so you have a private piece of property that is essentially inaccessible. The government will buy it if the landowner is willing to sell it; the government priority is to buy land that's inside the boundaries, rather than outside. Expanding boundaries is always very difficult. But the question is the value. You are entitled to walk in there, but that doesn't entitle you to build a house, or take water, or any of those things. It's sort of a private camping spot, if indeed there's a spot to camp.

So there are several of those in the Los Padres. And the Forest Service gets along well with the landowners. In all of the years I've been in elected office I've never had anybody complaining. We actually swapped out some land when we did the bill that we would love to introduce but it's got to have a lot of political work before we can get it adopted. That will go to the next [congressmember]. Because the management of Big Sur is still a huge problem—the highways, the role of the federal government, and actually some land swaps where we would add to the wilderness by taking land that the Forest Service has out of it, or even out of the boundary. The Big Sur Valley, for example, in Big Sur, where all the private residences and restaurants are, is actually inside the Forest Service boundary. So those people really didn't know it, but it might affect title when they go to sell it and stuff like that. They'd like to be out. And there's no purpose for us having a boundary that overlaps on top of a commercial residential area. It would take an act of Congress to do that, to change those boundaries, and I've drafted it but we're not going to introduce it this year.

Big Sur has always been a fascinating challenge because of all the publicity it's received from novels and movies and car ads. I mean, there is almost no car ad that doesn't show part of the Big Sur Highway, particularly the Bixby Creek Bridge. The world has gotten to know it and the media, Facebook and social media, have put it on a bucket list: one of the top-ten things you have to see in the world is Big Sur. So the world is flocking, the tourists are flocking there. And there just is not the capacity. If you drove down early in the morning you'd wonder why there is nobody on the highway. But if you drive down at noon—

Reti: Oh, yeah. It's just solid cars.

Farr: —just solid cars.

Reti: And you can't get a reservation any place during the summer, except months ahead of time, in my experience.

Farr: Shary and I had our 48th wedding anniversary the other night in Lucia Lodge. And while we were having dinner, although the lodge was closed, there were people constantly knocking on the door. They just wanted to know, "Is there any place to eat, or is there any place that they can camp?" They had checked all the places and they were all full. We met some German guys who said, "We'll sleep anywhere. Just tell us, is there a place?" So we really have a challenge of—how do we manage all these people?

At the same time, we get pushback from the residents who live there. You know, when Ansel Adams was alive he wanted to make it a national park. It actually wasn't a national park he was seeking. It was a national seashore, but the

national seashores are run by the National Park Service. So everybody said, "Oh, he's going to make a national park and they're going to kick you all out of your houses and turn this into a big Yosemite and nobody will be able to live down here." That's not the way it works but that's way the rumor went. Many residents got furious and hired lobbyists to lobby against Cranston's bill. Alan Cranston had put a bill in to create a national seashore. And Leon Panetta, in the House, was lobbied so heavily by the Big Sur residents against it that he fought it. And what we came up with was a compromise, to create at least a governing council made up of all the entities, far from being a park. The council is called the Multiagency Council and meets quarterly to discuss every issue in Big Sur. But [that was] not the same as Ansel Adams' wish.

Reti: So what is that, what's it called?

Farr: It's very interesting. I'm glad we're talking about it because nobody has ever written about the Multiagency Council and how it is very effective. Big Sur covers about seventy miles of the coast of California, from Carmel to San Simeon, where the Hearst Castle is. That seventy miles is mostly owned by the Forest Service, but [some land is] in private ownership. There are pockets along the area where the state owns some beaches. Like you mentioned Garrapata; Andrew Molera, which is the mouth of the Big Sur River; and then up river, Pfeiffer, which is the old Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park, the oldest park in the area. And then further down the coast, there's Limekiln State Park and Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park. That's where the waterfall flows into the ocean. Those are all state parks. The federal government owns a park at the mouth of Pfeiffer Canyon, called Pfeiffer Beach.

And then they own campgrounds south of that, at Kirk Creek and one at Mill Creek. Then there are private campgrounds, like Ventana, which not only has the fancy rooms, but also a campground. And there's Fernwood and other kinds of privately owned campgrounds. There is no one government in Big Sur—it's a patchwork of multiple governance. You have commercial landowners; you have state parks, federal parks, the national forest. The whole experience is dependent on the road, which is a state highway managed by Cal Trans. They're the biggest tenant in Big Sur, and the one that people usually have the most problems with. But then, you've got regulatory agencies, like the county. You have the Coastal Commission, now the National Marine Sanctuary, that is on the wet side, up to the mean high tide line.

So what has been created there is a governing council because there's no one government in Big Sur. There's no elected government, except for in the south part of Big Sur there is a public school district called Pacific Valley Unified. It's a K-12. I think it has about thirteen students. As a unified district, it gets formula money. But it's based on per capita, and when you don't have a lot of students there, it's a struggling school. It's a school district that's always been very avant garde. I mean, it's been very hippie and lifestyle. Lots of parents won't send their kids there. They home school them in the South Coast. The school only meets four days a week and they use the fifth day, usually Fridays, to do social events at the school site. They lease some land from the Forest Service for a dollar a year, in a place called Pacific Valley. And that's the only elected local government. And it's, as I said, at the south end of the county, in an area known as the "South Coast."

So this governing council, what we call the multiagency council, is made up of the Forest Service; Highway Patrol; the Park Service, Caltrans; the property owners association; the chamber of commerce, the business association; the elected members of the county board of supervisors, the fifth district supervisor; the assemblymember; the state senator; and the congressman. And we meet about every two or three months and have a town hall meeting. The agenda is whatever anybody wants to talk about. We've never had a vote. It's all done by consensus. And what is interesting, Irene, is that you know, I've been in a lot of elected positions and worked for government in different positions, and what so often happens is that all of these governments sort of get in their own silo and they don't talk to each other. It's a lot of work to get them all in a room. Here everybody is in one room.

Reti: This is in Big Sur, you're having these meetings?

Farr: In Big Sur, in the Big Sur State Park Lodge. They have a nice little lodge there with a great meeting room. The park hosts set some coffee and donuts and things like that out. And anywhere from 100 people will show up, residents of all ages and styles. All of their concerns—whether it's fires that we're going through; or right after these fires are stopped they're going to be worried about—what is the storm damage going to be? What can we expect? So we'll get experts in from NOAA to talk about it. And the residents ask us to set the agenda: "We want to hear about—" And then each of these agencies does a report. Cal Trans is always the one they're most interested in because you're going to re-pave something, or the road has fallen out—how long is it going to take to repair it? Are you going to shut down the road? What hours, what days, what months? I

mean, we've had that road shut down for as long as a year, to move a landslide off of it, if a mountain just fell down on the road—once essentially they had to move half the mountain to be able to open the road—it took a year.

Reti: That was down on the South Coast.

Farr: Yes.

Reti: I remember that.

Farr: I love attending these meetings. People love these meetings. Afterwards, we all go to the River Inn for lunch. It's not contentious. There are—I mean, emotions are there. I remember one time, the most filled room was a few years ago when we had lots of helicopter flights and jet flights along the coast, for several reasons. One is that you have a military base on the other side of the mountains and the navy does practice bombing raids. They drop a smoke bomb over at Fort Hunter Liggett, so the navy pilots who are training to be attack pilots do a run from Lemoore Air Base out to Fort Hunter Liggett. And I think some of those pilots, the navy pilots, say, "Hey, on the way home, let's take a joy ride along the coast." There are all kinds of restrictions of height because of the sea otter and the Sanctuary. I think you have to have 2000 feet minimum to protect marine mammals. There is none of this right along the water. But what you'll see is that a lot of these planes fly at eye level when you're on the highway. I mean, they're pretty low. They love to do it. If you were a hotshot pilot in your own plane, you'd love to do it too. (chuckles) But guess what? All those things are against the law. People do it anyway. And you're out in a remote area, who is going to catch you?

And the other reason there were so many helicopters—it was about marijuana, illegal marijuana crops. So we set up the meeting. We had the navy flight folks come in. We had the sheriff. We had all the law enforcement. And they said, “Yeah, we’re doing this hemp project (I forget what the task force was), where we go out and photograph around harvest time.” This was in the fall and in the early summer. “We were looking for marijuana plants.” And people were saying, “Yeah, you’re doing that. But what about these planes just hovering over our houses and things like that?”

And the other side was, “Look, helicopters don’t have to fly in a flight pattern, per se, but certainly all the other planes do. And if they’re buzzing your house or joy-riding down the coast, report them.” And somebody said, “We can’t. These planes move so fast. How are we going to report them?” And the navy control officer said, “Look, we know where everybody is. All you have to do is tell us the time and what kind of plane you think it is. Is it a military plane, or is it private? We can track down who it was. Those people can actually be grounded and perhaps lose their license. So do report it and here’s the number to do it,” which I thought was very helpful. You petition the government and they listen and they can respond.

The DEA folks, the people that were photographing, or looking for illegal pot growing, said, “Sometimes we have false positives in our photographs. For instance, tomato plants come out in our photographs looking much like the print of a marijuana plant. So if you’re growing tomatoes, maybe somebody is taking pictures of them.” So this one gal gets up and she says, “You know, I am just so sick and tired of these planes. They just hover over my house all the time. You

know, I'm just minding my own business. I don't grow any tomatoes. I don't grow any pot. I live alone in a house and I like to be alone. And all I do is I take my shower and then I go out and lie naked in my patio."

Reti: Oh.

Farr: "And I don't know why these helicopters are hovering." (laughs) And she was really sincere. The whole room just burst into laughter.

Reti: (laughs) Oh, no.

Farr: I'm sure that those pilots had a lot of fun.

The point is that we use this multi-agency council to resolve things. And what I've seen, what's very interesting that's happened over the years—and you can see it going on in this nation now—I mean, people get really angry about things. They kind of have road rage anger and they want to go in and just blast the government, blast somebody responsible: "How could you be so foolish as to do this? How stupid you are." And you really hear them using these kinds of terms. Angry. They would get up in these meetings and just blast Cal Trans, or blast somebody else. And then you'd have a discussion around it. And usually the government agency is saying, "You know, that's a good idea that you just suggested. It would be nice if you called us, instead of just coming to the meeting after we'd made the decision. But we made the decision on thinking about that and thinking about some other things. And here's where we get the conclusion." And what you'll see is the audience beginning to say, "Oh, we never thought about those things. You have to think about all that?"

Reti: They start getting an idea of the complexity.

Farr: They start getting the whole picture, yeah, the complexity. And what I've seen over time is the community is so much more sophisticated now on all of these issues of land use and traffic. The anger aspect is gone because they'll now raise these issues. They know people will listen to them, as long as they're not yelling and being vulgar and things like that. And when they hear the response, I think they're very appreciative that government—in some cases—says it's a great idea. I remember one time they were going to close the road during a peak tourist season, like Labor Day weekend. And they said, "Can't you just put it off for another week, until the season is over, after Labor Day?" And Cal Trans said, "Yeah, we hadn't thought about the impacts." I can't remember exactly what the details were, but it was something like that.

So what you see is, without having to pass any laws, because we're not a government, we're just a council, we kind of talk about it in terms of the multiagency council is the epitome of a Vermont or New England town hall meeting. One resident said, "But I lived in Vermont. They were never this good."
(laughs)

So it really is an excellent format to get all the levels of government, and the private sector listening to the residents and constituencies—some of them are renters and some are home buyers—and go over everything: about the inability to find adequate rental housing for the workforce, so that they have to commute on the highway. And the tourists overrunning it. And the lack of toilets. And the illegal marijuana activities. And the hikers that get lost. I mean, you name it. And

the ocean stuff. It's all there. What's wonderful about it is to be able to have a format that can discuss it openly.

Reti: Great. That's wonderful.

Point 16

And your family also has land in Big Sur?

Farr: Yeah, my father was involved in helping a large landowner with ten thousand acres of land break it up. I mean, he had to for financial reasons. And so, he contacted my father, who was a lawyer and a friend, and said he wanted his ideas on it. My dad found some buyers for some of the parcels and it ended up there was a piece that nobody wanted, which was the site of this mansion that was built in the 1930s, that Mr. Nesbitt bought from a guy named Moore, who had set up this ten-thousand acre ranch in Big Sur he called the Circle M Ranch.

I don't know a lot about him, but he was from an Eastern family. They were an extremely wealthy family. They owned four railroads. They owned controlling shares in the national biscuit company known as Nabisco. And they owned controlling shares in Reynolds, the big cigarette company. And he came out here wanting to be another kind of Randolph Hearst and create a big cattle ranch empire. He picked some of the most rugged land to do it on, much more rugged than the Hearst Castle has. He built a mansion house and he had an entourage of about thirteen people—chefs and valets, and chauffeurs, and people like that, and built housing for them. His mansion house was built on the spot that we now own. But it is geographically totally unstable. The land is always moving.

Reti: Is that Point 16?

Farr: Yeah, and it's called Point 16 because it was built in section sixteen of the USGS map. But my father ended up—when the land around Circle M Ranch broke up into pieces—the mansion had been pushed over the hill—when Moore left, the story is that his wife stayed there the night that the house cracked. And it scared the heck out of her. She said, “I'm out of here. Put this property on the market.”

He put it on. It took years and years to sell it. And the interesting story behind all that is that Marion Hollins, who built Pasatiempo over in Santa Cruz, was the realtor who sold him the property in the first instance, who'd put together the property by combining many abandoned property claims from early homesteaders. He had money and didn't want to tell everybody that he was going to put this big estate together. So he had her surreptitiously making Circle M Ranch—she was going around and buying up homesteads. I think he thought that if they thought there was a wealthy buyer, the prices would have gone up or something. But she acquired all these homesteads and created this 10,000-acre parcel, which is pretty huge in Big Sur. I don't know if it was financially successful, but he built quite a cattle operation. And he built his own telephone line because you're off the grid. There's no power there. There's no telephone. He had to build everything. He had a big generator. He built a telephone line from his house in Point 16 all the way over to King City, to connect with a private line. And he hired the Harlans, who were homesteaders there, to lay the line and maintain it over the years, to do all the work on it. The Harlan family is still there, and the stories that I've heard and the reports that come from that

family—they said it was the biggest house on the coast, next to Hearst Castle. They said it was harder to get an invite to go to dinner at Moore’s house than it was to go to Hearst Castle with Randolph Hearst.

So Moore left, and then Marion Hollins put the property on the market and found this guy named John Nesbitt, who lived in Carmel, who made some money in the radio world. He had a program that was called “The Passing Parade.” Somebody told me it was like the early Johnny Carson of radio. And then he moved into television and wrote short stories for Bell Telephone Hour and narrated them. And he came to Carmel and that’s where he met my dad. Actually, his wife and my mother were friends from cooperative nursery school, both having young daughters in the school and meeting each other as moms. And the fathers got together, and then because my father was a lawyer and in politics, and social in this county, Mr. Nesbitt wanted to know if he knew people who would buy the land, when he had problems.

After the mansion house cracked and Moore abandoned it—the stories I’ve heard is that some derelict lived there and one time it caught fire. And Nesbitt said, “This is just a liability. I mean, you can’t fix this thing. So just push it over the cliff.” His wife said he took out all of the handmade chandeliers, everything made out of iron. There was this sort of Western cowboy theme inside the house and all this stuff that was all of value, hand irons and things like that. He had eleven fireplaces. Nesbitt stored all this stuff he saved from the Mansion House in the servant’s quarters, which was a three-story wooden building. I don’t know whether it was before or after he pushed the mansion over the cliff, but the

servant's quarters caught fire and melted all of the stuff in there. (laughs) So it's just been—the development of this property was just bad luck.

Reti: (laughs) Yeah.

Farr: Anyway, nobody wanted to buy it because after that it was kind of rundown—

Reti: So the house was over the cliff. There is no house there. The servant's quarters has burned down.

Farr: Yeah. It had burned down. There was still the gardener's shack and there was all the infrastructure but it had all kind of grown over—the driveways. He'd built a lot of infrastructure on it. So my dad ended up with other friends who were lawyers down there. And they were all looking at the property, just saying, "God, wouldn't it be fun—" I mean, it was fifty miles down the coast and in those days you only had to go down to the Carmel Highlands to be in wilderness.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: They said, "You know, nobody wants this property. Maybe we could ask Nesbitt if we could buy it, or at least buy an interest in it. Maybe he hangs on—" So the story was told to me, and I've never seen anything in writing, that they struggled—four of them were going to buy it. One of them was going through a divorce. He couldn't afford to be involved. So the other three lawyers thought that maybe they could raise eight thousand dollars and buy this ninety acres.

Reti: This is back in the—

Farr: Fifties. And I think Nesbitt stayed in as a partner, so they only bought three-fourths of it. And then they bought Nesbitt out. And then, later on, in the late sixties, my father was in Washington and his partners called him up and said they had had an offer from somebody to buy the property and they wanted out. My dad loved Big Sur and wanted to keep it. He just loved having it and going there all the time, (not that he did anything with it). So he said, "I'll buy it out from what she offered." And he did that and then he left it to me and my wife, and daughter, and my sister when he died. So that's how I got the land, along with my family.

And I've improved it—not much, because the infrastructure was there, the beautiful gates and beautiful driveway. They couldn't push over, what I call the wine cellar, a big cement cellar that was there just a little bit above ground. It was ugly. It looked like a bunker. So I built an outdoor kitchen right under it. And we put in outdoor bathrooms. And my father, for a caretaker to live there, he got a mobile home in 1985, a modular home. So I fixed all that up. I go there all the time. I love it. It's my passion to go down there. I love gardening and landscaping, building stuff, clearing— I've built a trail down to the beach and I've got a really good water system, and put in solar panels to have electricity. I've really fixed it up. It's nicer now probably than when Moore had it.

Reti: And people come. You rent it out for weddings and things like that.

Farr: Yeah, we do that occasionally. We have lots of events there. My philosophy about land is that nothing just should be locked up, even though some places

have to have limited access [for protection from overcrowding]. But what galls me is that so many beautiful places—I mean, this is what happened in Europe is that royalty, rich families, just bought everything that was beautiful and locked it up.

Reti: Enclosures.

Farr: Enclosures. And in this country, there are not only enclosures, but then the people don't even live there. I think that's why the Coastal Act was so successful in California, is that people didn't want to lose their coastline to private ownership. They wanted to be able to get access. So one of the things that I do on my property is that I am always inviting people to come have picnics and camp and do that. And the idea is that, (particularly when you have weddings there), these people come here. I've watched them get out of their car and you can hear them complain, "That damn road! I've never been on a road so windy as that."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: A lot of people think it's the most beautiful road in the world. But it depends on your attitude. (laughs) You see these grumpy people: "God, what are we doing way down here? What is this place? Are this bride and groom hippies? What's going on?"

Reti: (laughing)

Farr: And you see them walk up until they can see the view of the coast. And then they say, "Oh, my God. Have you ever seen anything like that?" The minute I hear that I think: we got them there on the environmental side of politics.

Because in politics you can't lead, unless people will follow. And people will not follow unless they understand. So a lot of times you hear politicians suggesting something and everybody thinks: well, where did you ever get that crazy idea? I don't want to do that. Well, they say that because they really haven't heard everything about why this crazy idea needs to be done. So the most important thing you can do for the electorate is educate them, because that prepares them for supporting political decisions, or opposing them for good reasons, but at least doing it with knowledge, rather than just kneejerk— So I think the more you expose the public to experiences in the outdoors and in wilderness, and if you expose them where they have value added and they learn something: "Oh, that's what a sea otter looks like," or, "That's a redwood tree?" all the things that one can do to make it an enriched experience, then people appreciate it. So when you are trying to do environmental legislation, or anything that involves the management of limited natural resources, you've got the public's support behind you because they understand why it's important to save it and not build on it, or clean it up, or whatever it is.

It's my philosophy, but as a private landowner on the Big Sur Coast, I think it's a duty of—and I wish every private landowner would do that—would use their properties for entertaining purposes and not just lock them up. There are homeowners in Big Sur who only come for a couple of days a year and live in the most beautiful homes and lock it all up. I think that's a shame.

Reti: Yes.

Pinnacles National Park

So tell me about making Pinnacles a national park.

Farr: Well, it was very interesting. I love the town of San Juan Bautista in San Benito County, and annually go over there and talk to different groups. I'm very fond of a small Rotary Club that meets in San Juan Bautista in the mornings: the Early Birds. So we were talking, after I'd told them what was going on in Congress and asking about local stuff. One of the members who'd worked at Pinnacles said, "Congressman, you know what? Why don't you change Pinnacles into a national park?" And my thought process (I didn't say it)—inside I thought, Pinnacles? National parks are Yosemite, and Yellowstone, and Kings Canyon.

Reti: Iconic.

Farr: Just iconic places. I think Pinnacles is interesting and I've been there, but I didn't think at the time that it rises to a national park standard. But local folks said over and over again, "This is our greatest asset in this little tiny county of San Benito, but people don't really come here, and they don't appreciate it because, you know, 'Monument,' they see the Monument name on a map and they think it's just a statue. Parks just have a different appeal."

So I took all of that in and I thought about it. And then Ken Burns came out with his series on "National Parks: America's Best Idea," a wonderful series.^{xviii}

Reti: I loved that.

Farr: I watched every one of them. And I got to thinking because he was talking about other parks. There are fifty-eight national parks in the United States. (I created the fifty-ninth). I asked my staff to find out, what are the smallest ones? I found out there was Arkansas Hot Springs National Park and Carlsbad Caverns for bats—very small in acreage. So you don't have to have a lot of acreage, and what Ken Burns was showing is that these national parks are all sort of representing different eco-niches. They're not just spectacular mountains like Yosemite. There are Everglades, that are flat, but full of wildlife and represents the Everglades, no mountains in there at all. So I kept thinking—well, it would be interesting because the Pinnacles has got a lot of rock outcroppings and we have condors there and things like that.

So I called Ken Burns. I said, "I really appreciate your series. I'm a member of Congress and I've been thinking about introducing legislation to create a national park because only Congress can designate a national park. Have you ever heard of the Pinnacles, Pinnacles National Monument?" He said, "Oh, yeah! I grew up in California. And I used to go to the Pinnacles when I was a young kid. I love that place!"

I said, "Well, do you think it warrants national park status?" And he said, "Yes! I'll tell you why—" He's so clever with words. He said, "You know, if John Muir were alive today, and if he had seen the Pinnacles—" It's been a national monument since 1910, when Teddy Roosevelt thought it was such a remarkable place that he made it a national monument, just like the Grand Canyon was a national monument. Burns said, "But what the National Park Service is doing is trying to create parks that are truly representational of unique features, or unique

flora and fauna. But you know what? They just don't have a park that demonstrates what happens with tectonic plate movement."

Reti: Yes, yes!

Farr: He said, "So it's the missing book on geology of tectonic plate movement. That's why it ought to be in the collection of national parks."

Reti: That's brilliant!

Farr: I said, "You've got it. You've won me. I'm going to do it. Would you come and testify?" And he looked at his calendar on the day we were going to hear the bill and he said, "Well, I can't make it that day." I said, "Okay, but can you write a letter?" And he wrote a letter. It was such a beautiful letter that I've framed it and gave it to the Park Service. I hope they hang it in their visitor's center in the Pinnacles because it tells that story.

In 1910, Schuyler Hain was a farmer and he used to do private tours on the ranch. He's the one who recommended to President Teddy Roosevelt to make a monument out of it because it was so unique. And I think that until we started discussing it as a national park, we didn't realize it had all these other incredible features. I mean, the bats, the number of bats that are there, and the variety. And it also has been discovered that Pinnacles has over three hundred species of bees. Three hundred!^{six} I didn't even know there *were* three hundred species of bees. And tons of butterflies and all kinds of things are there. Plus, the rock outcroppings have been famous for years for rock climbing. And with the re-

introduction of the condors, it's the only national park with some condors in it. So it's got all these ingredients to be a national park.

So I carried the bill and, as I told some people the other day, I kind of low-keyed it in Congress because the Republicans had no interest in expanding the Park Service: "We're not going to take any more public money and buy private land and lock it up in parks." So my point was, "Look, we're not buying it. We already own it. It's already in the Park Service. It doesn't change anything. The uniforms are the same. All we're going to do is change the sign out front."

Reti: (chuckles)

Farr: "From a monument to a park. No cost." There was no opposition. The board of supervisors in San Benito County was excited about it, you know, rotary clubs, and chambers of commerce, and things like that. So we had all the backup letters. We got it through, and again Barbara Boxer really did a marvelous job in the Senate of getting it through. And President Obama signed the bill and it became the 59th national park. And I think it's the only one that's been created while he has been in his presidency.

I always had the idea that this would help the economies of these small towns, and that's why they asked, particularly San Juan Bautista. But the town that has really seized it is here in Monterey County, Soledad. Mayor Ledesma of Soledad, the day after the bill was signed, went out and started changing the signs in the city to say, "Gateway to the Pinnacles National Park."

Reti: "Gateway to the Pinnacles." I've seen those signs along Highway 101.

Farr: And he's now advertising it. They've built a visitor center with city money to get the tourists off the highway to introduce them to the Pinnacles and wine country. And there were some motels and B&B's on the road along the way, up near the entrance. They were just barely surviving, trying to get some customers from the wine trade. A gal who was working for a small B&B owned a laundromat in Soledad that was about to go out of business, because [these motels] were cutting back and cut her back. When it became a national park, suddenly business was booming. They hired her back. She's got to hire more people. Her laundry business is booming. Now there are people suggesting, "Maybe we ought to build some restaurants. We've got all these people coming." And the number of people that have come to Pinnacles because it's a national park is just amazing. I never thought a name change would mean such an economic boost.

Reti: Because there are people who want to see every park.

Farr: Yeah. And Soledad is doing, I think, a very good job. The unintended consequence, but a very positive thing that I thought about after we created this excitement, this fury, about this national park, is that for the first time I realized that all the tourist attractions here in the Central Coast have been on the coast [itself]. When you think about it, it's the Santa Cruz beaches and the Boardwalk, and Capitolas, and the Moss Landing, and the fisheries, and Monterey's, Fisherman's Wharf, and Seventeen-Mile Drive, and Big Sur—it's all about activities along the coast. For the first time, we have an attraction, a magnet, saying, "Wait a minute. It's not only the coast. What about the inland valleys? There's a national park in the inland valleys." And it's not only the Salinas

Valley, but it's the Pajaro Valley. And two counties. I think if we market it even better, we can start using these sort of off-coastal magnets to get people inland, and then develop a lot of rural tourism, agricultural tourism. You think of wine tasting and expanding on that to a wide variety of rural places and the eco and ag tourism that goes along with it.

So I think the national park is—if you think about what we have done to invest in economic development—might be one of our smartest economic development moves. Plus, creating another park here at Fort Ord, not only the dunes state park, but the inland riding, horseback riding and walking in the dunes in Fort Ord. So I've done a lot to invest in upgrading the lands and protecting them, and then getting more notoriety for them, so that people will then enjoy them, and while doing so spend money at local businesses.

Reti: Well, it makes me think about how the surrounding communities, of both Pinnacles and Fort Ord, actually, are more diverse, in terms of there being more Latinos in those communities. Historically, national parks have not sought out people from those communities as visitors.

Farr: Yeah, it was the 100th anniversary and Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, who comes from an REI background—she's keen on bringing minorities into the parks. And a lot of these celebrations of the 100th anniversary are centered around minority communities. And what Ken Burns' movies showed and pointed out was that a lot of the ideas for creating our national parks were from the minority community: the Japanese community that loved to paint the mountains of the Olympic Peninsula brought those paintings to Congress to show the need for a

park designation; The Everglades were [fought for] by a former slave family that lived in the Everglades and didn't want to see them all hacked up for sugar cane and development. These were in the Ken Burns series. But he also pointed out that even though there were minority cultures who did the advocacy and did the politics to bring it to people's attention, the benefit has gone to mostly just to the white folk, the white families who have been using the parks. So they are really trying to show people that there are connections between minority cultures in the United States and the historic relationships with national parks and parks around them.

When you think about it, in this area all of this land was owned by the Spanish, then the Mexican government. The first real estate transactions in "Alta California," in what we now know as California, were done by the Mexican government. Of course, it wasn't California yet. They gave Mexican land grants. I've always referred to them as Spanish but I've learned that the Spanish didn't give land grants. It was the Mexican government that did. All of those land grants went to Mexicans living here, living in Alta California. And the largest land grant, 46,000 acres, went to a Native Indian, who had grown up in the San Antonio Mission and had ended up with jobs of responsibility, so much so that the Mexican government gave him private land. Think of it—the California real estate business started here and these lands all belonged to minorities. There wasn't a single Anglo name in it. So all of this land that started being this great state and started being some of the biggest real estate market in the world, all came from Mexican families and one Native Indian family—45,000 acres; 20,000 acres; 30,000 acres. These were not small tracts of land. I think there's so much

history that we can [interpret for the] tourism experience. And I've tried to use my role in Congress, and in the State Legislature too, because I authored a parks bond measure in the State Legislature, which the voters approved. At that time it was the largest park bond in history.

You know, it's interesting. The Central Coast has always had some—our elected officials who have gone to Sacramento before me and after me—we've all played a big, huge role in supporting major environmental legislation, particularly the parks. I mean, Fred Keeley passed the largest park bond ever when he was in the State Assembly. And I had done the one before him, the largest at that time. Henry Mello had a very big role in doing a lot of environmental legislation. John Laird is now the secretary of resources. So the Central Coast has politically been the standard bearer for major environmental legislation in Sacramento. It would be tragic if reapportionment knocks these districts into some kind of urban ownership and we lose the passion of the coast. It could happen.

Proposals for Development at Elkhorn Slough

Reti: So let's move on and talk about the work that you've done on behalf of oceans. First of all, let's talk about the efforts to protect Elkhorn Slough. Dan Haifley was telling me about this and he was saying that it goes back to the Humble Oil proposals of the 1970s. Were you involved with this when you were in the State Legislature, or on the board of supervisors?

Farr: No, that was actually before I came. It was actually my father [Senator Fred Farr], when he was in the State Senate. The Humble Oil Company wanted to build a refinery in Elkhorn Slough because those refineries were being fueled by

fuel oil and you already had the PG&E power plant there and the refractory, which made fire bricks. Moss Landing Refractory, they called it. I don't know who owned that, but on the other side of Salinas there used to be this huge, ugly scar. They mined all the diatomaceous earth from there and they would take it by railcar over to Moss Landing and mix it with saltwater and other things, heat up in kilns to make these fire bricks for steel mills. It was a very successful business until other foreign countries started making them a lot cheaper. And so that business went under. That industrial site is still there.

So Humble comes along and said, "It's already an industrial site and we could open that slough into a big deep harbor," because you had the big deep harbor outside the slough with the deep Monterey Canyon. And so geographically, they thought, ideal. And it was halfway on the coastline between the big user groups of Northern California and Southern California.

They made their proposal to Monterey County, which had jurisdiction over Elkhorn Slough at the time. The chair of the planning commission was a Pebble Beach resident named Charlie Kramer. He was appointed by the supervisors to the planning commission. I'm sure he must have been a conservative Republican. I think he had made his fortune owning men's fashion stores. A very well-dressed man, very proper. And Humble Oil made their proposal. The planning commission voted against it, but it was appealed to the board of supervisors, and the board of supervisors overturned the planning commission in a 3-2 vote that granted Humble a permit to build a refinery.

And this was before the Coastal Commission or anything else. My father was *livid* about this. He went and spoke before the board and urged them not to do it. He just happened to also be a close friend with his colleague in the State Senate, George Miller from Martinez. And George Miller was saying, “You know, Fred, if you could get Humble to come up here, we’d worship them. We’ve already got a refinery here, the Richmond refinery, and we’ll add another. We’ll be Refining Capital of the World. We’d love it.”

So my dad really worked on trying to influence Humble that there was a better place and better infrastructure and all of that. But what was very interesting—the story my father told me—is that the Planning Commissioner, Charlie Kramer, actually organized Humble stockholders who lived in Pebble Beach and around here to petition to the board of directors of Humble, who I’m sure as individuals on the board of directors of Humboldt Oil, they had no idea where Moss Landing was and didn’t get down in the weeds of this thing at all. And all of a sudden, they’ve got disgruntled stockholders saying, “You’re not going to build it in Elkhorn Slough, or we’re going to raise all kinds of hell.” And not wanting to upset their stockholders, the Humble board decided maybe they’d accept Senator Miller’s offer and move to Martinez.

Reti: So that was how it worked out.

Farr: So that was interesting because it didn’t win on political opposition and debate. It won on just market forces and market influence. I thought it was very clever.

Well, so there were proposals even when I was on the board of supervisors. People wanted to do a Newport Harbor [at Elkhorn Slough]. They wanted to build a bunch of homes right on the water, essentially dredge the whole thing and re-engineer the whole Elkhorn Slough. They called it the mudflats, the Elkhorn mudflats. Nobody thought about birds and mammals. It was just useless. Useless property and we've got to make some money off of it.

None of those things really came to any kind of fruition and fortunately, in the 1970s, the politics of resource management started growing at the federal level and at the state level. Congress began enacting laws, like sanctuaries, and had created an estuary law to protect estuaries. And Les Sternad, who was working for the Coastal Commission, a wonderful, wonderful guy—just got to learn the protocols for how do you nominate areas to be recognized as an estuary. You have to go through a lot of the politics of local government wanting it and everything like that. He just sort of singlehandedly took everybody—like handholding a piece of paper and getting it to each of the gates that have to approve it. And he did that, with the help of the newly created Coastal Commission and the Coastal Act.

Reti: So this was in the mid-seventies?

Farr: And the boundaries of the Coastal Act were around the Elkhorn Slough. I mean, I even had a guy come to me when I was in the state legislature, when Elkhorn was being proposed. I had no idea where he came from, or how he ever found me. A real dapper guy, iron-rod, an old man. A real military guy. He came in and he threw all these big charts and maps on my desk and said,

“Assemblyman, we want you to help us. We’re going to build a nuclear submarine repair station in Elkhorn Slough.” I looked at him and I said, “Why there?” He said, “Well, you’ve got that deep water harbor and we can drill right in there. We can keep it in deep water. We can keep the submarines submerged and then bring them up for repair and nobody will know it.” It was all stealth, like Star Wars. We were all talking about creating a national marine estuary and he’s now going just the opposite (laughs), a nuclear submarine repair station there.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: He talked like the decision was all made and he was just letting me know out of courtesy. I had never seen anything like this. I had no idea who he was connected to, or how he could get all these decisions made without any locals knowing about it. I just asked him if he’d talked to David Packard about it. Because David Packard, with his daughter, was building the aquarium and getting into that, and buying the ranch around Elkhorn Slough.

Reti: Yes, they still own a lot of the land around there.

Farr: Yes. And David Packard had been the former undersecretary of defense under Richard Nixon. I said, “Have you talked to David Packard about it?” I don’t know if he even knew who David Packard was, I forget. It was just like, shock on his face. I said, “Well, you better talk to him because he owns all the surrounding land and I’m not sure that Packard of Hewlett Packard will want you to build a submarine base here. *I certainly can’t support you.*”

But it gave a little impetus to, hey, we'd better hurry up and get this thing designated [because of these] crazy ideas of doing refineries and submarine repair stations, and big, Newport Harbor high-end housing and all that. But Les Sternad walked it through every gate and got it designated. He's to be made a saint for having done that. One person can really make a huge difference. And now it's a national federal marine estuary, one of the largest in California. I'm not sure about that factually but somebody told me that. But it's turned over to California State Fish and Game to manage and the Elkhorn Slough Foundation has been created to help provide private sector funding to protect wildlife habitat.

Reti: Because of the large populations of wildlife?

Farr: Oh, yeah. The foundation gets a lot of money from the power plant there because the power plant is releasing the warm water into the bay. They bring in the cold ocean water to cool off the burners that are generating steam to run the steam plant, to run turbines, to generate electrons. And then that water, as it goes through the cooling, to cool things off, it picks up the heat and they release it into Elkhorn Slough. So a lot of water at higher than natural temperatures gets released and can probably cause quite a bit of damage. So they pay a fee every year and the foundation has been the recipient of that money. They also used to paint all the boats in Moss Landing every few years, so they got a free paint job for the fishermen. I don't know if they still do all that. The ownership of the power plant has changed quite a bit. The plant itself has been retrofitted to burn natural gas rather than fuel oil, and greatly reduced its air pollution.

I think what's interesting here is we have this huge polluting industrial plant right on the edge of a virgin estuary/slough. But I think it's a model for how to work these things out, so that the mitigation of adverse damage can be handled and paid for by the industrial plant. I think the Elkhorn Slough is really a great operational model of how you can make things compatible. But the slough is going to be protected, and then little by little it's getting expanded, as the surrounding lands and the watershed are protected, or farmed to avoid runoff. They're being able to control runoff and things like that, and teaching the strawberry farmers over there how to till, how to do organic strawberries, so that their pesticides and herbicides don't run into the slough and affect the wildlife there. Also, the slough and estuary have become a great training and educational ground for the local schools. Certainly, the researchers from the Moss Landing Marine Lab have a great laboratory there. I don't think we've ever put together the economic benefits of putting that land into permanent preservation, but over time it will produce more value than an oil refinery. It would be fun to see those figures.

Reti: Hmm. That would be a great project.

Farr: If people look around at the tourism that generates from there—the visits, the value of the educational component, the fact that the slough now has these slough safaris, which have been very popular. They take people on these flat-bottom boats, sort of like you have in the Everglades. Each trip goes out and does an account of wildlife—birds and flora and sea otters and sea lions and so on. So it's kind of a working laboratory of nature and being able to observe and record

what's happening over time. Thank God we never got the Humble Oil [refinery]. My dad was so pleased when they were able to defeat that proposal.

National Oceans Policy Act, Oceans 21

Reti: So let's forward to a much bigger picture, nationally, with the 2007 National Oceans Policy Act, Oceans 21.

Farr: What happened is that when I got to Congress there was a lot of discussion about reauthorization of the Magnuson Act. The Magnuson Act was adopted in [1976]. It essentially created NOAA, created the national marine sanctuaries. It was the first oceans management bill. It created a lot of silos, in fishing, and in resource recovery, and in research and so on. There was a feeling that all of that work that had been done in the sixties needed to be upgraded, and that we needed to reauthorize the Magnuson Act, and we could, at the same time, tweak some of these federal agencies.

Legislation had been tried but nothing had been adopted. And then, 1998 was the International Year of the Oceans. I was on the House Resources Committee in Congress. I hadn't gotten to the Appropriations Committee yet. I hadn't been appointed to it.

I've always been interested in trying to bust silos because I think you get too isolated; you get too bureaucratic. You always just want to sustain your own silo, without realizing that perhaps it could be absorbed more cost effectively into somebody else's silo, and maybe all these silos could be getting a better bang for their buck. I'm constantly discussing these things because I hate inert

bureaucracies. And with the Year of the Oceans, I thought, well, let's really ratchet this up, so we can get some attention to the oceans. We've got legislation that we need to do, but let's figure out what we want the new legislation to address, to upgrade from the old law.

Well, what was initiated on the side, outside of government, was the Pew Charitable Trust created a study committee to discuss the new legislation. It had Leon Panetta and Julie Packard and Christie Todd Whitman and others. We thought, well, that's a private sector advisory group. Why don't we create one that has credibility with the government, by having Congress create an Oceans Policy Commission? I carried the legislation to do that and so did Senator [Ernest] Hollings [from South Carolina]. I got Don Young (R-Alaska) to be a co-sponsor; I got everybody on the subcommittee to be co-sponsors. So when it got to the full committee, the whole subcommittee not only passed it, but were co-authors of a great bipartisan bill. But the chairman of the full committee was a guy named Richard Pombo, who was always trying to disrupt everything. He tried to disrupt this, but I think Don Young overrode him. The bill went into conference. I'm sure it was probably Hollings' version that got out because he was leaving the Senate and they probably wanted to give him something. But it was essentially the work of, the substance, of my bill.

White House Conference on the Oceans

So President Clinton signed the bill as one of his last acts before leaving office. And George Bush came on board to make the appointments to this new commission. So the whole thing started about 1997, 1998, with this focus on the

oceans. Then I said, “You know, the only way to get attention in Washington is you’ve got to have a White House Conference.” There’s been a White House Conference on Tourism; a White House Conference on Children—all these themes, but never on oceans, which are owned by the federal government out to three hundred miles.

[phone rings, interrupts]

When we approached the White House about having this White House Conference on the Oceans, they thought it was a great idea. We needed a keynote speaker. I thought it would have to be in Washington to be a White House conference. And then Barbara Boxer said, “No, we can do it anywhere. The conference doesn’t have to be here in D.C. We’re going to do it in your district.” She said, “Look, Sam, you and I are both up for re-election and you’re the one who thought all this up, so we’re going to do it in Monterey, California.” I said, “Well, it sure would be nice if we could get somebody who is really high ranking. I’d love to have the president but I know we never will.” She said, “We’ll get the president.” So she just really put the pressure on him. At the time, she had a special connection because the president’s wife, Hillary Rodham—her brother was married to Barbara Boxer’s daughter. So Barbara was essentially sister-in-law to the First Lady.

So President Clinton decided to come. And when he decided to come, it was quite remarkable. I don’t remember another incident where all the White House came. Not only the president came, but the First Lady came, Hillary came. Al Gore came. I think three cabinet members came—the secretary of commerce, the

secretary of the interior—who was the third one? It was a remarkable turnout. And they were all in one place at one time, which is so unusual to get all these heads of state out of D.C. and to Monterey at the same time. Rarely do you see the president and the vice president in the same place at the same time. They try to keep them separate for security reasons.

Reti: Where did you have the conference?

Farr: The speeches were over in the Monterey marine park there by the Coast Guard pier, on the side of Cannery Row. The president and the vice president went out to Hopkins Marine Station ahead of time and got tours of the tidepools and so on. And we developed a beautiful poster, which I loved. Because we decided to have a poster contest, inviting all the schoolchildren, and it ended up the judges couldn't decide which one was the best, so they took all of the top winners, like five or six or seven of the suggested posters, and made a collage out of them. And what the teachers were telling me is that the kids drew those pictures of marine life and what they thought was under the water. None had ever been to the ocean; they had never seen it. They did it all from drawings from books even though they lived within a few miles of the coast.

And then we made lots of posters and we had President Clinton and the First Lady sign each one and frame it for the kids. I don't think the kids were that excited about getting signed presidential autographs of their own artwork, but they were *really* excited that Julie Packard gave them free tickets to the Aquarium because they'd *never* been in the Aquarium. That was like: we don't know who this guy is who is president and all these other hoi polloi's are, but we are so

excited about going to the aquarium! And we had all of the marine educational institutions around the bay set up little booths in the plaza in Monterey, off the wharf there. We called it a science fair. It was a great day. It was a huge day of celebration.

And I remember, I had to leave early because I'd been asked by the State Department to represent the United States at the opening of the International Fair on the Year of the Oceans in Lisbon, Portugal. So Sylvia Earle and I flew out of Monterey, and transferred onto a British Airways flight from San Francisco to London, and then another flight from London to Portugal.

Reti: Oh, my gosh. From the local to the international.

Farr: And then the next day, after we got there, we had a live press conference from Portugal back to Monterey, where Jacques Cousteau's son, Jean-Michel, did what I think might have been the first underwater press conference, with reporters in Portugal asking questions. And he's in a dive suit off the aquarium underwater in Monterey.

Reti: Oh, my gosh!

Farr: Yes, quite an electronic technology feat.

Reti: Yes, and that was the late nineties, when that was probably just becoming possible.

Farr: Yeah. So it was a thrilling week for me.

So the reports from the two commissions came out by the Pew Charitable Trust and by the National Oceans Policy Council, which was made up of Bush appointees, many of whom were from the oil industry, and yet they had a lot of the same recommendations as the Pew Charitable Trust, that essentially we need to pay a lot more attention to the ocean, and do a lot of cleanup of the ocean, and eliminate the conflicts of interest, and install best management practices.

So we took the recommendations of both commissions—I mean, having two is better than one—and we drafted a bill out of it. I really worked on that with my Sea Grant fellow staffs in my Washington office.

Developing a National Oceans Policy

The recommendations were, first of all, the federal government needs to have a national policy about the oceans. How do you have a national policy? In researching what that meant, we learned from the Legislative Research Service that Congress had only acted twice to create national environmental policy. One was the creation of the Clean Water Act and the second was the creation of the Clean Air Act. So if we had a national ocean policy, we had to develop what it would be. And how do you do that? Well, you pull together all the federal agencies, because this is a federal recommendation, and listen to NGO's [Non Governmental Organizations] and so on. That's what the bill required the president of the United States to do.

This was a time when the Republicans were just sort of reversing all of the advances that the Democrats had made on the environment under Clinton. They had this hatchet guy named Richard Pombo [who I mentioned before], who was

a congressman from the Stockton area. And he, a young guy without much seniority, somehow ended chairman of the Resources Committee. And he would not even hear the bill. So we lost a whole year on that.

Meanwhile, Leon Panetta ended up being the chair of the Pew Charitable Trust Commission, and Admiral Watkins was chair of the federal commission. He had quite remarkable Republican credentials, not only had been former chief of naval operations, but under Bush I, he was the secretary of energy. And he loved ocean policy, from his navy years. And he was really a forward thinking—unfortunately he just passed away—but he could not even get Pombo to see him.

Reti: Geez. (whistles)

Farr: I remember him telling me one time—he said, “Can you go talk to the president? I was very close with his father but I can’t even get in the White House to see the kid.” “To see the kid” (laughs) I said, “Admiral, I’d be glad to go.” I went to a Christmas ball for just that purpose, to talk to Bush: “Hey, can you see Admiral Watkins?” He knew who he was and he said, “Sure, I don’t know why he can’t get past the guard gate (that guards the president for appointments and everything), but I’d love to see him.” Because [Watkins] really wanted to get the president engaged in helping get this bill get through Congress. But it never happened.

And years after that I got Republicans—we tweaked the bill here and there—and then I got Republicans to carry it. My staff was furious. They said, “You did all the work.” I said, “In politics it doesn’t matter who gets the credit, as long as you get it done. I think people will know that I worked on this bill, that it’s my bill,

but the Republicans have much more cachet among their party to be able to get a bill." We couldn't—we tried, I think, three different legislative sessions.

And finally, Obama gets elected, and I suggest to him, "Let's run it up the flagpole again." And fortunately, his staff told him this was really important and we really needed to develop these policies because there were so many conflicts of the sea going on and we really didn't have a standard. The rest of the world was— We were lacking.

There are still conflicts that can't be resolved until the U.S. signs the treaty on the Law of the Sea. The reason why it's important for us to sign that, and the reason we haven't signed it, is some really right-wing conservative thinking is that in the open waters of the oceans, the international waters, it's first come, first serve. If America gets there first and we find the oil and we find the minerals, we can extract them, and we can have proprietary interests on these essentially international resources. So they think if you sign the Law of the Sea, you're creating protocols that will not allow them just to take these things. It's one of these things you always hear about, "sovereignty rights." I've studied a little bit of law. For the life of me, I can never understand those arguments at all. They are just sort of rumor without any legal credibility.

But by not signing it, for example, our ships and most of our research vessels are owned by the navy, and also NOAA owns them—they like to do nearshore exploration. Well, you have to invite the host country, which is the protocol anyway because it's in their waters. Each country owns out to three hundred miles, an exclusive economic zone, so if you're going to go into those zones, you

have to have the permission of the host country. And to do research, which could be threatening to the country because some foreign country is doing it in their coastal waters. We invite them to be on board. Now, the navy tells me that the problem is that if any of our ships get seized, if somebody says, "We think you came in here to do one thing but you're spying on us. We're going to seize your ship and your crew," because we're not signatories to the protocols of how you resolve those conflicts, we couldn't get out. There's no easy way of getting out. So those are some conflicts there that can be resolved by us signing the Law of the Sea treaty.

The idea was, well, if we don't have a policy about how we are going to treat the ocean, and we dump everything we don't want into the ocean. I mean, all these communities and cities just dump raw sewage into the ocean and fishermen fish out of the ocean, and the federal government dumps nuclear waste in the ocean. Is this going to be a sewer pit, or is this going to be a resource, where we're going to live off creatures of the sea? The question is being asked all the time. We need a way to resolve conflict, like the Law of the Sea, or to have policy about how you manage these resources, especially near shore, where states have rights and laws also, but no common theme upon which to build policy.

Reti: So, just as you have the air, which is a common good and you have a policy around that that you can refer to, you need something for the oceans.

Farr: Yes. So my bill was to set that all up, but we couldn't get the Republicans to pass a bill. But Obama and his staff said, "We think we can do that. We can do it by executive order." So he took my bill and turned it into an executive order. The

only thing he couldn't do is the governance piece. Once you've created a national policy, we would need to manage using legislatively created regional commissions, like the Fishing Council. These are very regional—it wouldn't be one size fits all for the whole coastline. This country is so diverse in how the ocean interacts with land, and what kind of fisheries you have, and what kind of mining operations you have, and so on and so on. So we were going to make it sort of indigenous, so that the politics of New England and the politics of the Gulf states, and the politics of Western states could all be done separately. Unfortunately, the president doesn't have the authority to create that by executive order. That has to be done by Congressional action. But he essentially could create a national ocean policy by executive order and that's the key first step.

All the federal agencies met for over a year and they came up with exactly what we hoped it would be, which was: "do no harm." So that is the national policy of the United States government, that our agencies and our actions (and the ocean is still publicly owned, so we're the landlords of the ocean), that our activities in the sea ought to be on some standard of do no harm. And where it becomes really significant is when the navy is going to do experimental sonar work. That means you can't do that at the expense of whales and porpoises and other things that are sensitive to sonar. You have to take into consideration when those mammals are in your vicinity. And if they're migratory, you just don't do the action. You wait until the migration is over. So all activities in the ocean have to take into consideration the damages those activities could do. And hopefully, what we do is we cause less damage, and we stop dumping and hurting the

ocean, and start healing it. So the president, wonderfully, has done this. And now we've got to just implement it.

But the Republicans, particularly a congressman named Flores from Texas who comes out of the oil industry, a very narrow-minded guy, in my opinion, head of a very conservative think tank within the Republican Party, and comes out of the oil industry, is an accountant or something—he just hates this idea that we have a national ocean policy. So every year he's able to put language in saying that no money can be spent to implement the national ocean policy.

So we don't have an appropriation for it. Part of it is just all these agencies having a staff person feed in. But there is no budget for a national oceans policy. Not yet. I think eventually we'll have to have it, just like we have it for national fisheries councils that we've created around the country.

But I think what we've been successful at is the ocean is no longer dismissed, in the sense of, "Who gives a damn? It doesn't matter what we do." People are now realizing that it means a lot what we do for the health of the oceans. And even in California with our Coastal Act essentially doing a very good job of land use management, I think the next jurisdictional area is going to be planning for the ocean. And eventually you'll use the same tools you use on land. You'll end up with zonings and master plans, and saying, "Here's where you can do something and here's where you can't."

We've already started to do that with State Marine Protected Areas. And we have degrees of restrictions, just like we have on land. The most protected area, as we talked about earlier, was creating a wilderness. A national park is

protected too, but national parks have roads and they have restaurants and hotels and campgrounds inside of them. And then you have the monument status of BLM land. I think what you'll end up doing is, as we understand the ocean, as we understand the geology of the ocean and the flora and the fauna of the ocean, we will see that there are really rich areas that ought to be put off the table as far as fishing them or mining them. California has done that very well. The federal government has been very slow at it because of opposition from commercial interests.

Reti: What about the seamounts?

Farr: I introduced legislation just a couple of weeks ago, before we left [for summer break from Congress] to get some attention for them off California's coast. It's gotten nothing but, from all the fishermen, negative attention. Jane Lubchenco, the former director of NOAA and an internationally respected marine biologist—she's really pushing this. And hopefully Obama will listen to her and we can get it done. But I've also heard nothing but negative from all the fishermen and they've been lobbying heavily the congressmembers who would be my natural allies on it, who now, because it's an election year, are all saying, "Well, you know, I've got to back off."

Reti: So the fishermen are concerned that they won't be able to fish in these very rich areas?

Farr: Yeah, but the areas that we are talking about—these are really deep, deep—these seamounts are underwater mountains going down thousands of feet and they don't fish that deep. The near-surface fish—only rarely does anybody go out

that far and fish for them. So it isn't like we're taking anything away that they use. What they're upset about is any restrictions on any potential fishing grounds that someday they *may* want to use. They don't want any regulations or restrictions. That attitude is why we need to protect these rare seamounts. But if it gets to a point where they have to go out and fish those geographical regions, it seems, to me, that we're in a lot of [trouble].

Reti: Take the last fish.

Farr: Yeah, the last fish. (laughs)

Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act

Reti: So did the Ocean Dumping Prevention law, otherwise known as the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act, did that pass?

Farr: Yeah, that was already in the law and we reauthorized it. And what we've done—it was not a lot of money—but we've allowed the Coast Guard and other entities to work on cleaning up debris. And I've actually seen it happen. We have debris that's in our Monterey Submarine Canyon, left by industrial uses. Over at Moss Landing, we had pipelines put in to bring oil to the power plant. Right off here at our coast, the purse seiner fishermen, one of the things they use are these big iron doors. I'm not exactly sure how the operation—but they're big, heavy stuff. And if they get snagged on a rock, with all the nets and wires and all that other stuff, the fishermen can't move their boat. They've essentially anchored that ship to be there forever, unless they cut the gear with welding torches and

all kinds of other stuff. And then they just let it sit in the ocean. Well, now modern technology can locate these death traps on the ocean floor.

Reti: It's just down there in the canyon, or all over?

Farr: Yeah. Or not so deep, because if it's so deep they can't get access to it. People throw tires and cars and refrigerators, and all kinds of stuff in the ocean. So they're trying to pull all that stuff out. The irony is the NOAA ships that can discover all this and actually do very high-resolution filming and see exactly what it is—I don't know if you've ever heard the term "floating death traps"—but sometimes they lose their nets and they continued to snag innocent bystanders, including, sometimes, whales. The nets are still there. They're not dissolving and the fish are running into them and the fish just get caught. Nobody is pulling them aboard. They just die. They are death traps. Gill nets, things like that. So what NOAA is trying to do is clean all that stuff up, bring back a healthier ocean. The doors—they were so heavy that when I was out on the NOAA boat they said, "The only people we can get to pull these doors up are the families that still own the boats that lost them."

Reti: Because those boats could handle that kind of weight.

Farr: "They can handle that weight, which the NOAA boat can't handle." So I said, "Well, why didn't they—if they were an investment to the families, obviously they made investments in all of this stuff, why didn't they go back and get it?" He said, "Because nobody knew—they couldn't find it. What we've done, in doing our charting we find this stuff. And because in this bay people know everybody, you describe or show them what it is and they say, 'Oh, yeah.

The Pezzini family, they used to fish out there, and yeah, they lost some equipment many years ago.’ And you call them up and say, ‘You guys want your—we’ll help you. We’ll pay you. We’ll pay you to haul this stuff out of the ocean, this junk that’s killing fish.” So that’s what the oceans debris bill is all about.

And one other thing is we encourage re-use markets to get established. For example, we got a private sector company recycling industrial fishing equipment. Because when you’re on a boat, you’re in an industrial area. You’ve got a lot of nylon lines and nets and you got a lot of metal and gear and all that stuff. A lot of it is sometimes old and you’re going to throw it away. But where do you throw it away? In the past, it was dumped in the ocean. Now this company has set up these big dumpsters along the wharf and you just put your stuff in there. And they’ll pay you for it.

Reti: Rather than dumping it in the ocean, you actually get some money out of it.

Farr: Yeah, they used to dump everything. If you didn’t want it, you just dumped it overboard. Now you bring it home and throw it in the dumpster, and somebody will pay you, or you’ll get some credit out of it. So we’re beginning to help the marine user industry, industrial activities in the ocean, to be sensitive to ocean pollution and try to, instead of dumping everything that mankind doesn’t want, keep it on land and dump it on land, not in the ocean. And revive fisheries and things like that, so that we can have what we call sustainable fisheries. I’m told that if we don’t reverse the amount of plastics going into the oceans, that by

2050 the weight of all the plastics in the ocean will exceed the weight of all the fish in the oceans. That's scary. That's why we need to act now.

Ocean Acidification Research Bill

Reti: What about the Ocean Acidification Research [bill]?

Farr: Well, that's another silo. What scientists tell me is that the biggest thing that's happening in oceans is that they're becoming acidic.

Reti: Because of climate change.

Farr: Because of climate change. We haven't had enough money and enough time to study all of this stuff, but we know it's happening. But we don't know all the root causes. We know that now it's reached such a critical stage that the shellfish companies that grow mussels and oysters and clams and things like that, who have been very successful along the Pacific coast, particularly in the Northwest and up into Alaska, are no longer being able to keep those nurseries vibrant because the infantile building of the shell structure of these animals can't be formed because of the acidity of the oceans. So they've had to move these nurseries to places like Hawaii because the ocean has not acidified uniformly all over the world. It's happened some places more than others. And why is it concentrating there? What's causing it?

So we want to continue to study it and we need to prioritize ocean acidification and fund the research. That [was the intention of] my bill, co-sponsored [with] Alaskan Congressman Don Young. Don is the kind of guy who usually wants to keep federal government off your back. He has been the chairman of the

Resources Committee and is sort of the antagonist of the environmental community. But one thing he's keen on is the fishing community. I needed an ally in the Republican Party because they're not going to listen to a bill from a Democrat. So I went to Don Young and asked him if he would cosponsor this bill with me. We've always had kind of a political tug of war and we kind of like each other. We disagree on everything but we can laugh about it. (We talked about him earlier when we were discussing steel jaw traps legislation.) And he actually—you can work with him. Well, I *thought* you could work with him. He said, "Sure," and I said, "Well, why don't you introduce the bill? You go first and I'll come in second." He said, "No, no, no. You did all the work on it. I don't like to do a lot of the work. You do the work." I said, "Well, then put your name on it and I'll do the work for you." "No, no. You go first." So it's the Farr-Young bill and it still hasn't had a hearing.

Reti: Oh, that one is still in process.

Farr: It went to the Science Committee over a year ago. The Science Committee—we'd gone and talked to the chairman and everybody on the committee, the Democrats, were all keen on it. The Republicans on the Science Committee are not from coastal states. And they say (this is the Science Committee), that they're not dealing with any legislation that deals with global warming. I said, "This is not global warming!"

Reti: (groans)

Farr: "This is ocean acidification." [The Republicans said], "Well, we think it's tied to global warming." [I said], "Well, we don't know that. Maybe it's getting

acidified from all the stuff we're dumping in the ocean. Anyway, it's bad for industry, bad for fishing, and bad for everything. We ought to get the study done." Well, they won't hear the bill. We only have a couple more weeks. We're not going to hear that bill. I'm just madder than hell. That's two years of trying to get them in one House to— I mean, the Senate could pass it, but they're not interested. This is why I'm glad I'm leaving the Congress. It's the frustration with a bill like this. It's so simple. It should be done like that, without controversy. (snaps fingers)

The ocean science community came to us and said, "This is our top priority for ocean sciences, to get some research money on ocean acidification." You'd think it would be, okay, that's easy to do. In the past, it would have been real easy to do. Right now it's— It will be picked up by other members of Congress next year and hopefully they'll have better luck than I did.

Reti: Okay, well we'll talk more about that stalling and partisan divide later in this oral history. Should we take a little break?

Farr: Want to go get a sandwich?

Reti: Yeah, let's do that.

Reflections on the Elections Process

Reti: Okay, we're back for part four of September 1, 2016. We haven't talked about all the elections you've been through.

Farr: You know, I was thinking about the first election I ever ran. I got out of the Peace Corps. I came home and my father was running for re-election for the State Senate. My mother had died; my sister had died. My father and I were living in our house. And he was busy. I didn't know what I'd do, so I thought I'd get involved maybe in working with Democratic politics. So there was a wonderful man named Sam Karas, who ended up as the county supervisor after me. Sam was a leader in the community, an actor, very active in the Greek community. He worked for a meat company, and if anybody needed a barbeque for a big event, Sam Karas would bring the meat, and bring his loud voice and the great character that he was. He was such a wonderful guy that when Clint Eastwood was the mayor of Carmel, he liked Sam so much that he asked him to be in *Unforgiven*. So he played a little cameo role in *Unforgiven*, which won an academy award for best picture.

But anyway, Sam and his wife Edy said, "Why don't you run for the Monterey County Democratic Central Committee?" I said, "What is that?" I'd never heard of it.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: (laughs) And they said, "Oh, it's where the Democrats get together and they talk about policy and everything. You've got a lot of background in the Peace Corps and your father is in politics." So they convinced me to go over and sign up, take out papers to be a candidate. I didn't know what to do. And they asked me to fill out papers for filing and it was: "What's your profession?" I was waiting to go to law school, so I just said, "Oh, my profession is that I'm a

returned Peace Corps volunteer.” That was what was on the ballot. And guess what? I got the most votes of anybody on the ballot.

And then I went off to law school and had to come down to the Monterey for meetings. I went to about two of them and they were so awful boring (laughs) that I think I resigned. That was my first elected office. I didn’t campaign. I didn’t do anything. That was in 1966.

And then in 1975, almost ten years later, I got appointed to my first job. I was trying to get a job back in Monterey County in 1974. I came down here from Sacramento with my wife and worked for a Democratic candidate for Congress named Julian Camacho. I just fell in love with him and he was this great, great candidate. Burt Talcott was the incumbent and Burt had just always won without any problems. But he never came home and he didn’t really serve the district, so there were some grumblings. And Julian Camacho, without any help, and everybody thinking a Mexican could never win this district, in his first time out, without spending any money he got about 46 percent of the vote, and everybody thought, oh, my God, Burt Talcott is vulnerable and this guy is exciting! That was in 1972 when Julian first ran.

And then, in 1974 he runs again. And this time the nation wakes up because they wanted another Hispanic in Congress. Ted Kennedy came out here. Fritz Mondale came out here. And Jimmy Carter came out and campaigned for him. And I was on the campaign and got to drive all of them and spend some time with every one of those guys. That really got me interested in coming back to Monterey County. I grew up in this county, and I wanted to come back and live

here, and I needed a job. So I thought, well, if I can help him in his campaign, maybe I could be part of his district staff. And that would get me home.

Well, he lost by a very narrow vote, lost because the Hispanics didn't turn out. We just assumed they would, and you have to work at that and have a real plan to get Hispanics, particularly farmworkers, out. But Julian lost and it generally discouraged the Democratic Party. But then Leon Panetta came along, and switched parties from Republican to Democrat. A lot of the old Democrats, the hardline yellow Democrats, were not going to support a guy who had been a Republican. But they were so angry at Talcott for being a do-nothing congressman that they eventually got behind Leon and warmed up.

Right after the 1994 election, I was appointed to a vacant seat on the board of supervisors, in spring of 1975. Jerry Brown was the new governor. So that was my entry into politics. I ran for the seat in 1976 when Leon Panetta got elected to Congress and Henry Mello got elected to the state assembly. I like to say elections have consequences. We were the first Democrats elected in almost half a century, my dad being the first Democrat from Monterey County. And after that, in 1980, I got elected to the state assembly. I was thinking about all the times I've been on the ballot; by retiring it is the first time since the 1970s that I'm not on a ballot. As a candidate for public office, you have two elections, the first, a primary; the second, a general election. So in a two-year period, you're on the ballot twice. I added it up and I think I've been on forty ballots, including that first one that I talked about. It seems I never lost any of them.

Reti: Constant elections.

Farr: Well, I ran for re-election in 1976—appointed in '75—and the law requires that if have an appointment at any level, you have to run in the next election—so I ran in 1976, as I said. That was the year that Leon ran for Congress. And it was the year that Henry Mello ran for the state assembly and I ran for my seat on the board of supervisors. And the irony of that is my campaign—it was a very short-lived campaign; it was just the primary and there was one other opponent, a businessman from Pacific Grove. I hired Mary Adams, who just got elected to my same seat on the board of supervisors, as my campaign chairman. And she and I ran a really—I think I spent \$1200 on getting a flyer printed. But I was the incumbent and I had a good name, political name. So I got elected in '76.

That's a four-year term, so that term was up in 1980, and at that time there was an open senate seat. So Henry Mello, who had been elected to the assembly, ran for the state senate, and left an open seat in the assembly. So I ran for that. And it was either me, or Gary Patton, or some of the other progressive Democrats from Santa Cruz. And basically, they all realized that Monterey County was a much more conservative county and had more votes, and perhaps they ought to let the supervisor from Monterey County be the candidate. After all, we were all of like politics.

That was my first partisan election and I got elected to the assembly in 1980. And then every two years after that I ran, up until 1992. I got sworn into the state assembly for that last term, when Pete Wilson won that election for governor.

I've been very lucky. I've had some tough opponents but in most cases elections are essentially arms races. You look and see who your opponent is and how

much money they have, because they've got to market themselves. You're the incumbent. You're the name that's known. They are the challenger. They're the unknown name and they have to get as well known as you are, plus they have to make you look bad and themselves look good. And the only way you can do that in a short period of time is to get lots of money and go on the air and have negative ads against your opponent, and have positive ads and biographies about yourself. And none of my opponents—some of them had really great names but wouldn't spend any money. One of my best opponents was Jess Brown who ran the Farm Bureau, still does, over in Santa Cruz. We were good friends and I think Jess—when I saw him at campaign stops—his heart wasn't in it. I don't think he really wanted to go to Washington. But he was a very substantive opponent and respected. We've been great friends ever since. I mean, most people you run against, you don't become good friends with.

Another exception is when I first ran for Congress in 1993, when Leon stepped down and there was that special election, where twenty-seven people filed. And one of the last people to file was Bill Monning. And we were furious with Bill that he did that. He just sort of jumped in. We tried to talk him out of it. He was stubborn and wanted to do it. There was a lot of bitterness after that campaign. He was bitter towards me and I was bitter towards him. But since then, we've buried all those hatchets and become very close friends and colleagues.

Reti: So, did you ever have to run a really negative campaign?

Farr: I can't think that I did. Once, one ad; it was in 1994. I was elected in a special election in 1993 and then the first general election was the 1994 election,

when every member of Congress was up for reelection. That was the year that Newt Gingrich—the Republicans had a landslide victory. And a fellow named Bill McCampbell had run against Leon [Panetta], and then had run against me in the special election, and then ran a third time. Every time there was an election he was on the ballot, and he was getting to be well known, and he was working hard. He ran some negative ads. Near the end the polls showed that he could beat me, so I think we ran a negative ad on him, on guns. I don't remember specifically, but I remember it was something about him not supporting gun control. I had and I had won on it in previous elections; it wasn't mostly like today negative hits, but it was the first and only time that I mentioned my opponent.

I was told by my campaign managers over time, "You've got to run a negative campaign," but I just refused to do it.

Reti: Because you didn't want to engage in that?

Farr: I just— Well, when I ran in the assembly, one of the times when I ran for the assembly, there was an artist in Carmel named James Peter, a very successful artist. He had his own art gallery. He essentially once said in an interview that he sort of painted by the numbers, meaning that he knew what kind of art tourists would want to buy, and so he would paint that: a lot of golf courses and barns and stuff like that. Very realistic paintings, in great detail, a very fine artist. But he would only keep his shop open on foggy days because on sunny days they'd go to the beach. He figured out what the hours should be and everything. He'd paint what they wanted and keep the store open to the times they were on the

streets. He marketed this whole thing. I think they closed the gallery in Carmel, but his son is now living in Maui, and is very well known on Maui as an artist. But he raised money and the artist world liked him, Republicans.

But he ran one of the most negative campaign ads, I'd ever seen. It was an ad where people of different racial backgrounds, all sweaty and wearing these tank tops and shirts, are sitting playing in a smoke-filled room around a card table. They are smokin' cigars and there's lots of money on the table. And they are saying, [gangster voice] "Maybe we could get Farr to get us out of here," pushing a pile of money as if a bribe. And as the camera is pulling back you realize they're sitting in a jail cell. I don't know how the dialogue went exactly, but it ends with him slamming the door of the jail cell. And essentially, saying that I'm bought and owned by the criminals and helping them. That ad—I mean, it had all kinds of racial overtones and everything, very well scripted and with professional actors doing a hit piece on me.

Reti: Ugh.

Farr: —that ad hit the air and around here everybody called his campaign. Certainly, *we* called his campaign, (chuckles) but we didn't need to because a lot of Republicans who were friends of mine just couldn't stand to see an ad like that run. And he actually pulled it from the air. He had spent a lot of money because there were professional actors that did it. I've seen some of those actors in other things, but—(laughs) That was the most negative campaign run against me, and it backfired.

I always had a sense that ads like that would backfire. So I've tried not to ever run a negative campaign. I don't think I needed to. But if they're winning by running a negative campaign against you, you retaliate by doing the same thing. That's just the nature of the beast. I used to brag that I never had to run a negative campaign. But I never had a really tough, tough race.

Reti: What do you think defines a successful campaign?

Farr: I think you win elections long before election day. I think you win before you file. That is, you do a damn good job. And what is that job? Obviously, people have elected you to go off to be the warrior in Sacramento, or the warrior on the county board of supervisors, or the warrior in Congress. They want you to be their Prince Valiant on a White Horse to do all the right political things. And they want to see you in the limelight talking about accomplishments.

The Importance of Casework

But what really gets you elected is the grunt work that you do in the office every day, with constituents coming in to see you about their problems. And being a good listener, being available, not just saying, "Well, he's not here," or, "He's too busy," Or, "He's somewhere else." I think that's sort of the Peace Corps volunteer in me that loved to hear every story and to try to do something about it. You know, you can go off to Washington and get caught up in the glitz of Washington, the social life, the political life, the who's-who, and think you are pretty important because you are treated so importantly. But none of that gets you reelected. What gets you elected is casework.

Reti: Hmm. So percentage-wise, in terms of your time—a lot of your time while you’re there is spent working with constituents, casework.

Farr: I felt that in Sacramento too, where you are really, really busy. You are busy in Washington, too, but it’s different. You’re busy in Sacramento because you are really carrying a lot of bills that are going before committees and you’ve got to stand up on your feet, and know your subject matter, and give an opening statement on why this bill is the most important thing that ever happened, and convince all the members in a few minutes, that are sitting there, that are reading an analysis of it, but basically, they’re going to make their instinctual judgment. A lot of it is party, but also the substance of the bill.

In Washington, you don’t do a lot before committees, but you do have just tons of meetings. And they’re usually with your colleagues—the Progressive Caucus; the California Caucus, a meeting on the oceans, a meeting on this— And you realize you usually go to meetings all day long and you haven’t accomplished anything.

So I kind of shifted and said, “You know, it’s much more valuable to me to spend time seeing my constituents who are coming all the way from California to my office. I think owe them my respect. They traveled all the way here to talk to me and I’m going to talk to them. So more than most members, I really do spend time with my constituents, and I think all that paid off in elections. It’s interesting, I had more district people visit my office in Washington, D.C. than ever visited my office in Sacramento.

Reti: They’ll go all the way there.

Farr: Well, Washington has huge appeal nationally, for all kinds of reasons. It's, I think, one of the greatest cities in the world, if not *the* greatest. I mean, you've got this center of international politics, with all the embassies there. You have the center for military policy, with the Pentagon there and all the military leadership living there—all its fancy titles, generals and admirals and so on. You have the White House, the president and all the secretaries there. You have the Supreme Court there. You have Congress there: the House of Representatives; the Senate. I mean, there are just tons of important people, all dedicated to public service. They all have titles and they live and work in these incredible buildings that are all monuments and beautiful. So that's the city. And there's a lot to do in the city, a lot of museums and stuff—

But the reason I think that most people go is related to their own issues on casework. They want to go to the Department of Veterans Affairs because somebody out here isn't listening to them. But there's special appeal in Washington. "All these big fancy marble buildings and all these people with titles. And I'm just nobody. I'm just Joe Blow from Middle America." And then they think, "Oh yeah, I've got a friend in this town. That guy or gal that we elected to Congress. I've seen them on the street in my town. I'm going to go visit them." What I call the touchstone of your community is in that congressional office: "There's a place in all this fancy city that relates to me and besides, we can get a VIP tour from our elected friend."

People walk in, and the first thing we want to know from the receptionist is, "Where are you from?" Some have been from the district. You get into, "Oh, you went to high school at—" People feel like—I think they feel a comfort zone in our

office. And we try to make sure that they know all the tours they can take. We'll set them up and give them suggestions for things that aren't even on the Hill, other kinds of things that you can do around town. We really pay a lot of attention, hands-on. And when they can come see me and sit down and talk to me, even if they don't have anything to ask me for, they'll go home and they'll tell ten people about what we did. I always say there is a Rule of Ten. And I tell my staff, "Look, the way you treat people, they're going to go home and say, 'I came in here and I was treated so nicely, or, 'I went to my congressman's office and God, they were rude to me.'" The message that you send people, whether it's positive or negative—I really think it's important for people to feel like they got listened to. Our office was good at that and I got re-elected.

Town Hall Meetings

Reti: Now, you've done quite a few town hall events.

Farr: I love town meetings, yeah. Members were canceling them left and right in Congress because they became so raucous. I know Senator Feinstein and Barbara Boxer canceled theirs. But I've never been afraid of that, even when we did the town hall meetings about the Obamacare health care bill, which were raucous. They kind of fooled me once at the first hearing. The first one I had was here in Monterey at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. The Tea Party bussed in a lot of people from the Bay Area. And they cleverly spread out all around the audience. They knew there was going to be a time when they could talk, so they dominated the microphones. I didn't know who they were. You know, first come, first serve. They were reading questions, and they were all

zinger questions. I realized, boy, I'm getting set up here. I got through it and I thought, from now on I'm not going to allow them to control my town hall meetings. So from then on I said, "Okay, now I want to hear from everybody. And to be fair, I want all those who are opposed to the bill to stand on the right." I knew they were all the right-wingers, so, "You stand on the right."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: "And all those who are in favor, stand to the left. And I'll just go back and forth." Well, the line for the opposition went out the door. And I'd say, "I'll stay here until every last one of you gets the chance to talk." And by the end (laughs) I was probably the only person left in the room.

But I think it is important to pay attention, to be a good listener, and to make yourself accessible to people. Even though they might not like your politics, they'll appreciate your style. Also, the rest of the room can judge them on how they conduct themselves. So when you need them to stop yelling and sit down, the audience becomes your enforcement to keep speakers orderly.

Reti: You get a lot of letters, I assume.

Farr: Yes, and we respond to everyone from the district, ship the rest to the congressperson from the district of the writer. But I don't think I'm any busier than any other congressman. I think I've had probably a higher percentage of votes than a lot of my colleagues living in the same kind of district. I mean, this district is about 49 percent Democrat and 27 percent Republican, and the [rest]

are nonpartisan. I usually get about 70 percent or plus of the vote. That's way above your party.

Campaign Finance Reform

Reti: Yes. Let's talk about campaign finance reform.

Farr: Well, when I first got there I was really into campaign finance reform because I had just gone through a campaign and I realized how expensive and awkward it was, with federal limitations different from state regulations. People will say that there's obscene amounts of money in Congressional elections. You're limited in what you can spend, but you're limited in what you can collect. From an individual, it's \$2700. And from a political action committee, it's just over \$5000. So if you're going to raise a million dollars, that's a lot of small contributions. Very few give you the maximum amounts.

So I think there are two things to focus on in reform. One, it is broken and needs fixing. But I think the rumor out there, or the feeling is, it's much more severely broken than it really is, because there is so much transparency in who gives the money and what they do, and their profession, and every expense the campaign has is public record. The public can see if you're getting special interest money and your public voting record can match your vote with money and, depending on the issue, could hurt the candidate. So transparency and full disclosure are good rules. Prohibiting corporate contributions applies to candidates' campaigns, but not "independent campaigns."

But where the perception of evil is correct is in the lack of disclosure and lack of limits on what are called “independent expenditures.” The Supreme Court, in *Citizens United*, essentially created a loophole. We’ve always had what we call independent expenditures. That’s when the donor decides, “I don’t want to give it to the party and I don’t want to give it to the candidate. I’ll give it to an independent campaign of the candidate’s campaign.” Some donors think they’ll create their own advertising campaign. And what happened with *Citizens United*—*Citizens United* was a right-wing group that wanted to attack Hillary Clinton. They did a very vicious ad against her. And she sued; her campaign sued. And the Supreme Court said that you have a right to free speech. You have the right to raise money, to get your message out without controls because you’re “independent” from the campaign. You have the right to raise money without any limits on it, and you don’t have to disclose who is giving it you. No transparency. That’s what is so galling. It’s the amount of money and nondisclosure. Secret campaigns, so to speak.

Reti: I’m not quite following you. So how would that be different from the \$5000 limit?

Farr: Because *Citizens United* says—say you, Irene, decide, “I got a lot of money and I love politics. But I’m not going to give it to the candidate because he’s got a campaign manager I don’t like, or he’s friends with somebody in the party anyway. I want him elected but I think I can do a better job getting him elected than the people he’s hired.” The donor then sets up an independent campaign to either be for or against a candidate or proposition.

Reti: I see.

Farr: Or, “I hate this guy, but the candidate running against him is so incompetent, that that candidate probably can’t win. So I’m going to do my own independent—“ You create an independent expenditure, an independent campaign. Legally, you truly have to be independent. You can’t call up and say, “I’ll buy this many ads and I’ll do this kind of ad.” You can’t coordinate with the campaign. I’m sure it’s done all the time, but this is what’s wrong with Citizens United. What it does is unleash gobs of money, without any transparency as to who gave that money. If you give me a candidate a check—one, it’s limited in the amount of money you can give. Two, it requires a disclosure of what the giver does for a living. So voters can see—well look, he’s carrying the incumbent’s legislation to help this business that happens to be owned by the donor, who is now turning around and giving him lots of money. That’s all transparent. Well, then you can go to the press and say, “Look at this. There is a causal connection here.” You know, that’s what Trump is trying to do with Hillary, saying that somebody gave some money to her husband’s foundation so that she’d do him a favor. I mean, she’s not that stupid because that’s totally against the law, to have a quid pro quo: I’ll use my political influence to do you a favor and for that I get something, a gift or money or whatever. That’s jail. People don’t do that. You don’t even think about it. And if a donor is naïve enough to raise the issue of, “If I help you, you help me,” I’d say, “Stop right there. You can’t even talk about it.”

So what I tried to do when I got in Congress is say, “Well look, raising money is really difficult. Why don’t we put a limit on how much you can spend?” We circulated a bill to do that. Actually, we’d had recommendations from several of

the good government groups like Common Cause, how to put a limit on campaign expenditures. But it had to be voluntary. My bill would say, when you go down to file for this office of the United States House of Representatives, you would pledge that you'd abide by the campaign expenditure limits. And if your opponent didn't sign such a pledge, or signed such a pledge and then violated it, then you would have permission to violate it too, to make an exception because the other side won't play fair. This was needed, so that you could at least not be wounded by the fact that you were going to pledge to play fair.

We got about 119 Democratic cosponsors. I think of all the bills that session, it might have had the largest number of cosponsors. But we couldn't get any Republicans on board. There was a Republican [congressman] named Chris Shays and a congressman named [Patrick] Meehan. And they combined together to write the Shays-Meehan Campaign Finance Reform bill and that got all the attention. And to their credit, they got it passed. I couldn't get mine passed because the Republicans wouldn't support it.

And then what happened is that, as more and more money got into campaigns, a lot of minorities said, "I can't raise money in my district. People are poor, so I have to go outside my state. I can't live by those campaign expenditure limits because my opponents all raise tons more."

Reti: So it all was out of control.

Farr: So I thought I had a really good idea, which I still think is a great idea, to limit the expenditures voluntarily. Essentially what the Supreme Court said in *Citizens United* and all these other campaign expenditures is, "If you're rich and

you want to buy your campaign message, you want to buy your campaign message, pay for it by television or ads, or whatever you want to do, you have a right to do that." Unfortunately, the people who have a lot of money, can do anything they want. Their contributors have to abide by the rules, but candidates' own money can be unlimited. So campaigns run as independent expenditures, as we talked about earlier.

Independent expenditure campaigns kind of tick off candidates because you do a lot of groundwork before you launch your campaign. Candidates test positives and negatives of themselves and their opponent. And out of that, you try to create a campaign strategy that will emphasize the positive, and hopefully they never expose the negative. And so, a guy comes along and says, "Well, I like you, Sam, but I don't like the way you are running your campaign. I'm going to run my own sidebar campaign and I'm going to give a whole bunch of different messages." Now you come along and say, "Well, thanks for your help, but no thanks. You're stepping all over my message. You're messing up my campaign. You don't know what you're doing." "Well, I'm rich and I can do what I want with my money and I'm getting friends to support this alternative message."

It's a mess right now.

Reti: That's crazy. It's a whole shadow world built on money.

Farr: Yeah. Well, that's why most candidates running, who are progressive candidates, are all talking about getting rid of this. Congress isn't going to do it. It's going to have to be by initiative effort, I think, or just getting enough states to get fed up with it.

Reti: Yeah. Okay. Anything else about elections?

Farr: Well, elections have a cleansing effect and they also have a disaster effect. Some of my best friends, who have been some of the best congressmembers for years and years and years, have been defeated in close elections where their opponent run very negative ads against them. And others have gotten elected, just beautiful, beautiful people. So it is what it is. But I think it needs a lot of work on disclosure of who is giving money, and perhaps limits. We must have a level playing field of fairness and total transparency. Local governments are doing this but not yet in partisan elections.

Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi

Reti: Okay. We haven't talked about Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

Farr: Well, Nancy was an old friend even before she ran for public office. She was a congresswoman when I ran in that special election in 1993. In fact, she hosted a fundraiser at her house in San Francisco. I had known Nancy before she got elected to Congress. She had been the treasurer or something for the State Democratic Party. She is the most charming of charming people. She's just phenomenal. She's smart and she's very, very political. And she endorsed me, even though I had a very powerful elected county supervisor, a woman running against me, a smart, hardworking opponent, well connected with the women's movement. I really appreciated Nancy's support. I also got my friends Anna Eshoo and Barbara Boxer, to endorse me, so I had some pretty strong people endorsing me. One of my opponents in that primary election was Barbara Shipnuck, who was chair of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, a very

able person. She filed as one of the twenty-seven candidates running against me. I thought many of the women incumbents would endorse her, wanting more women in office. But they endorsed me. I'd worked with them as a county supervisor and knew them personally, and all those friendships count when you need help.

Nancy is not the greatest public speaker, but she has one of the best political minds. She's been really helpful to me in getting me on the Appropriations Committee and so I supported her when she ran for the majority leader position, beating out Steny Hoyer. That was quite an election. She just out-organized everybody. She's a great organizer, in fact, the best in the country.

She won by starting to organize early by small groups. She started off with what we call a Whip Group. You just put together your friends, your personal friends, and say, "I want to run for this position in the caucus." Normally you've done something. You've provided leadership roles, been on task forces, helped members get reelected, raised money. Nancy had done all those things. But she tells a group of us, about ten of us, that she wants to form a whip organization and wants us to help her bring people into the tent. Essentially, you start off with your five best friends, or ten best friends in Congress, and you go out and find somebody else to come into the Whip Group. And then you just keep repeating that process, one by one, until you've found enough people to become the majority. And then you've won. But what Nancy always did to (laughs) get us to those meetings is that she would provide a gourmet lunch. Good food has been a Pelosi trademark. She still does this today. She did this when she was Speaker. If you're going to go meet with Nancy, there's going to be food there, especially

chocolate. She represents Ghirardelli in San Francisco. And it's going to be really high-quality food. So I remember when we were on the floor or something and at lunch hour you usually stick around the Capitol, eat in the cafeteria or something, and there are always a lot of lunch receptions. But my friends would always say, "Well, are you going to go to this event, or this event, or to Nancy's lunch?" And I'd say, "The best food is at Nancy's. I'm going to Nancy's" (laughs)

So we'd go to Nancy's and then sit there and talk about who we might bring on board, whip organizations, line up votes by friends talking to friends, who sign up to lobby individuals. "Did you talk to this person?" You just follow up on every lead. And you go to talk to those people. You say, "Well, I know them pretty well. I'll go talk to them." Or, "They're from my state. I'll go talk to them." And you report back after you talk to them. "What did they say?" "Well, they're leaning, but they need this; they need that. They need to talk to you, Nancy, personally." That's what the whip organizations do. All very personal.

And when it really got down to the wire, where you're counting every vote on Caucus Election Day, Nancy would organize all the people that volunteered to be her whip organization, she got her staff to call each of us at six o'clock in the morning the day of the election, making sure that all of her whip organization was out of bed and would be there by 7 o'clock to put together the get out the vote inside our own Democratic Caucus.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: Because what she wanted us to do, is for each of us to call the members that we had signed up to lobby. We'll monitor them all the way to the election box.

Because it's famous that in some of these elections, some people just promise everybody they're going to vote for them. It's a secret ballot, so nobody will ever know. Or they'll just not come to Caucus, not show up. So she didn't want to miss anything. She organized us to make sure that we called each of the members we were supposed to call at seven o'clock in the morning: "Get your butt out of bed and get down here. We're having a very important election today." And then you're responsible for checking off whether they got into the room. Did they come?

Reti: Boy, this is so grassroots!

Farr: Oh, yeah. And it's tense. But one of the things Nancy did—she made a huge banner to go in one of the sidebar rooms next to the big Caucus room, her campaign headquarters for the vote was there. And the banner said, "First we eat." (laughing)

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So everybody got up at some god-awful hour of the morning to come down there, but she was going to have the best gourmet breakfast, and all the coffee and everything. We'd sit there. "Now we're going to get our people. Wake them up. Tell them to come down here. Check them off when they come through the door. If they don't come through the door, you go back and call them again." When they get in the door, and they get in the room—we're all in one big room, hopefully every Democrat, and candidates for caucus positions make their speeches—first of all, we check to see who is present, then everybody gives their speeches. After that the polls—staffed by staff—present. You go pick up your

ballot. They hand them out at different tables in an alphabetical set—so A-H or something. So you're assigned to somebody in your alphabetical set to see if that person—did they go over and pick up a ballot?

Reti: Oh, so if they don't show up—

Farr: You make sure they show up; some had to be pulled into the room. Once in the room, you make sure they don't leave, make sure they pick up a ballot. There are several ways that a voter can duck out. (Remember this is tough, to choose among friends: They can pick up a ballot. You get the ballot and not turn it in, or you get the ballot and don't mark it.

Reti: You can check that too?

Farr: In a way. Not everybody wants to tell you. But usually people, if they're for you, they're going to say, "Look, get off my back. Look at my ballot. I just voted for her." So then my role is to see that they dropped that ballot in the box.

Nancy is better at organizing that than anybody I know. It's an internal get out the vote. And she applies that nationally too. She's really good at raising money and then getting people elected. I don't think anybody, male or female, has ever been better. That's why she was the first female Speaker of the House in American history and why she has remained the top Democrat for over ten years.

And then she's good on substance. She may not be good at public speaking, especially in front of the camera, so some may wonder why she's so popular in her party? Remember, she is so respected for outworking everybody. She's

staying up later every night working, raising more money, reading more background, knowing the subject matter, most of all, applying it to you.

I remember when we were doing the Central American Trade Agreement, which she was keen on defeating. She'd call people at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning and they'd say, "Well, why are you calling me at this hour?" And she'd say, "I'm working! We're going to have a big vote tomorrow morning. You ought to be working too. What are you doing sleeping? I understand you want to vote for this bill?" "Oh, I've got to vote for this bill because of my district. I've got people who do business in Central America." "Well, try to explain that to me. I know your district and I know how much money you raise. Who is it in your district that opposes this, or is on your side?" Some people try to bluff her and they can't: "Well, I have a really tough election." "No, you don't! You got elected by 74 percent last time. You have a 100K in the bank. You don't have a tough election. Take one for the team." She is—she is good. She's good.

Hastert, Majority of the Majority, Rule

Reti: Okay, so let's talk about the Hastert Rule. That's something which has come up in my research.

Farr: We're having an election [in November 2016] and every seat in the House is on the ballot, all 435 districts. There will be some incumbents defeated; there will be a dozen or so open seats, people who've left, like myself. Elections will produce new people. Most likely, the Republicans will be in the majority. Well, on January 3, when they get sworn in, we are essentially starting a brand-new Congress. And there's nothing there. There are no committees. There are no

rules. You've got to write all this stuff. The same thing in the State Legislature. The first act is to adopt rules on House organization. We keep 99 percent of the rules; we create a few to help the majority party, which controls everything that goes on.

Reti: You're not starting from scratch.

Farr: Theoretically you are. So the first thing you have to do is adopt these rules. And most people don't know what they are, but those are the procedures of the House. They set up the committees. They also set up the fact that you're going to have an elected Speaker, because the next vote is: who are you going to elect to run the organization? And that's the only time in the House that each member casts an oral vote during roll call. The nominations are made and there are nomination support speeches, like, "I second the motion or whatever," and then you give a speech about your candidate; each candidate stages the speakers. And normally there are only two people nominated, a Republican and a Democrat. And normally, everybody in the party sticks to their own candidate, but there are always some renegades who will then just throw out another name. Somebody will throw out movie stars' names, or Congressman John Lewis. Democrats who don't like Nancy will vote for John Lewis. He's not running but they'll vote for him to tell their constituents who don't like Nancy that they didn't vote for her. You need a majority of all of those present and voting to win. The candidate for Speaker makes sure they are going to have a majority, so there are no surprises.

So we adopt the rules and then we go and elect a Speaker. And you have to stand up and say who you're voting for. Some people say, "From the great state of Missouri, I cast my vote for the next Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi." But normally it's just, "Pelosi," or, "Boehner."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: (chuckles) And the party with majority wins, because they always win. That's why you want to be the majority. The majority has written the rules; elected the Speaker; now you control everything. You control the lights. You control the water. You control the rooms. You control the hearings. You control who the witnesses are. You control whether the bill gets out of committee or not. You just—

Reti: (laughs) You control whether there is Styrofoam in the House café, right?

Farr: Yes. Exactly. Change it from paper to Styrofoam, as the Republicans did. So I don't think the general public understands how important it is to have your party and your philosophy in charge of Congress. I think the Democrats are willing to work harder and have more institutional knowledge, and frankly, are more fiscally really conservative across the entire budget, including defense. We like to spend money but we don't like to spend money we don't have. The Republicans say they don't like to spend money, but they love to spend it on the military, even though they don't have enough money to do that. I just heard from Steny Hoyer that they did the research on the stock market since 1948. I don't know why they started at that date—but under Democratic leadership since 1948, the stock market has soared. And under Republican leadership, the

stock market has tanked. And everybody thinks that the Republicans are the ones that run a better fiscal ship. History doesn't show that to be true.

Reti: That's a great factoid.

Farr: Yeah, it is. Hopefully, they're going to get this history out there before the election.

So Hastert. Hastert said, "Let's have a new rule in our party that we won't bring any bill to the floor unless everyone supports it, because there are a lot of controversial bills that the majority of the Republicans don't like, but if they bring it to the floor with a minority of the Republicans and a majority of the Democrats, you can pass it with a bipartisan vote." This was a major change in governance. He started this rule that they weren't going to bring anything to the floor unless the majority of Republicans want it to be debated it on the floor.¹ For example, immigration reform. If that bill was brought to the floor, it would pass. There are enough Republicans and almost all the Democrats would vote for it. But the Republicans won't bring it to the floor. You can't debate or vote on something that's not on the agenda.

Reti: So this Hastert rule has been used.

Farr: Yeah, the Republicans use it. We don't have such a rule in the Democratic Party.

Cuba

Reti: Want to talk about Cuba?

Farr: I'd love to.

Reti: So I know you've led several delegations of folks who went to Cuba.

Farr: I've always gone as part of a delegation. The first time I went was when I was chair of the Democratic delegation from California. So every Wednesday we would meet in the sidebar room in the cafeteria and discuss California politics, issues that are intra-state, sometimes inter-state. I was chair of that, and I had a staff member named Pam Barry, who worked for me, who had been to Cuba a couple of times. She convinced me that I ought to go meet some Cuban people. One thing led to another, and we got invited, and I went. I fell in love with it, just fell in love with it: the Cuban people, the serenity of the island. It's a big island. It's almost a thousand miles long. It's the biggest island in the Caribbean. And a very important island, very diversified compared to other islands. And lots of beautiful spots and all that. I just thought, this is nuts that we have this—particularly being a Peace Corps volunteer and wanting to break down barriers, not build them up—that this was a silly, useless, ridiculous position to have against this island that we would be better off having as our ally, than trying to invent ways to make them an enemy. I thought we have been good at fearing a Communist country, “You can't like Communists.” And yet, we have a diplomatic relationship with Russia. We have a diplomatic relationship with Vietnam. But we can't have them with the little island of Cuba because we don't like Castro. It just struck me as a stupid policy that we ought to get rid of. And we formed a task force. And I think we brought a lot of knowledge to Congress about what Cuba is really all about. A lot of the rumor mill was just false.

Castro pledged to educate their island well, but they wouldn't let people leave, or you couldn't leave because you get paid so little. Doctors got paid fifteen dollars a month. That was a very good salary, fifteen dollars a month. So you can imagine people with that skill set didn't want to stick around for that salary. Professionals want to go to other countries to make money, but don't have the money to leave, or don't want to leave their families behind.

Some left. But Cuba had this big group of educated people, an emerging educated middle class—we wouldn't consider them middle class for their income—but essentially in their society they were better than poor. But there is nothing to do on the island, so they started to say, "We have to invent an industry that can use the intellect." And they thought that an industry that they could really invent and be productive in would be the pharmaceutical industry because people need to buy medicines and the labor is cheap there. But unfortunately, international businesses can't do business there because we would censor them if they tried to do business in the United States. We made it impossible for anybody in the United States to do any business in Cuba.

But after 9/11, Bush put them on the terror watch list, on the Axis of Evil, because they had all of this intellectual capacity to build pharmaceutical devices, chemicals. Security people didn't like it. They'd say, "Oh, they are investing all that into chemicals of mass destruction." Once in a while, Cuba would allow inspectors to go in. They weren't doing any of that stuff. We just made it up to try to keep a hard line on them.

I went so many times, and talked about it, and worked in working groups. And I think Obama did something beyond anybody's expectations. We were always trying to get Alan Gross out, the American who was captured there for spying, but, we didn't think there was anybody else who could be moved. And we didn't think we could establish normal relationships, or just have dialogue. And all of a sudden Obama comes on the 17th of December [2014], a day that will live forever in the history of Cuba. It will probably be a national holiday. It's the day that he jointly, with Raúl Castro, announces that the embargo is over. It can't legally be over until Congress lifts it, because we still have a lot of restrictions. But Obama has been able to work around a lot of those restrictions administratively. And just yesterday, I think was the first scheduled commercial air flight, other than charter flights that was allowed to fly out of the U.S. and into Cuba.

I mean, you could fly there but you went on a chartered flight out of just a few airports in the United States. It was weird. You'd go to Miami and you'd go to a really far end of the airport, a little tiny corner, and wait for hours to get a plane. It would be an old plane. It just was really awful, real Third World. So now, with these flights, you can just go into Tampa Bay airport that has scheduled flights, boarded in normal fashion. And it's just like a regular scheduled flight, like flying to Puerto Rico. Now flights can go right to different cities in Cuba, not just Havana.

Reti: Were you in Cuba with Obama?

Farr: I was invited to go. Yeah, I was real excited about that. But it was strange, because Havana was shut down, I think for their own security purposes. I don't think we required it.

Reti: Havana?

Farr: Yeah, Havana is just full of people and that's what makes Cuba exciting: the Cuban people, and Cuban music, and people in the streets, and they're all happy, and there are kids in the streets, and they are in their school uniforms, and it's just fun, fun, fun. When Obama got there, there was nobody on the streets. It was like the island had been abandoned. We couldn't figure it out. I guess the Cuban government told people, they shut down the schools and everything, "Don't bother to go out of your house." It looked spooky.

But then we went to the baseball game where the Tampa Bay team was playing a Cuban team. The stadium was packed with excited people. So that made up for the streets being empty. It was about the seventh time I'd been there.

I led one of the delegations Pam Barry put together with a nonprofit sponsor back in the nineties, and went to see President Castro in his office. He came out and greeted us. There were probably seven or eight of us. Maybe a couple of people brought spouses, so there were probably twelve of us there. And he asked who was head of the delegation. I speak Spanish, so I told him I was, and then he said, "Come here. I want to show you my office." So we were walking into his office and I said, 'I want to really thank you on behalf of a lot of people in this hemisphere for the doctors that you've sent to these countries. I have a personal story about why I think it's important because my sister died from a fall from a

horse in rural Colombia because she didn't have access to good medical care. Had one of your doctors been there, my sister might still be alive."

And he was so touched by that, his staff told me later.

But he took me into his office. It was kind of a bare office. He had a big, huge Sony television set on his desk. I thought it was kind of awkward because of the size of the set. There was a picture of Hemingway on the wall, and a couple of letters that had gone back and forth. There was a photo of Hemingway with a big Marlin he caught, saying it was a world record.

Reti: (laughs) That's great!

Farr: And Castro's response was that it couldn't be a world record because it wasn't caught in Cuban waters. It was caught outside of Cuban waters. So obviously, it wasn't a world record because it had to be caught in Cuba. Cute little stuff.

And then when we walked out he said, "I'd like to give you a gift for your visit here. Last week, President Vicente Fox from Mexico was here. And we had all the artists of the island donate paintings." They were all lined up in the hallway. He said, "I don't know much about art, but they tell me these are the best artists on the island." He was very frank with me. There was one that I really liked. "This is the one that Vicente Fox chose." I thought, oh. (snaps fingers) I get the second choice. I was not really thinking that I was going to get one because we have a policy, a gift ban rule for members of Congress. You can't give gifts to members of Congress. So I told him, "Mr. President, I'm really honored by this

offer but under the rules of my House, I can't accept a gift." "Oh," he says, "Well, you can accept it for a museum, can't you?" "Yeah, I can accept it for a museum." And I had one museum in mind, UC Santa Cruz. I thought, I'm going to give it to the campus. Because Santa Cruz had this sister city relationship with Cuba.

Reti: That's right, Ellen Farmer.⁸

Farr: Ellen Farmer—yeah, and all that work she has done in Cuba.

Reti: She's a good friend of mine.

Farr: Yeah, I went on another trip with her to the city [Guamá, Cuba], where the sister city relationship was. So then Castro picks one out and he says, "How about this one?" It was huge. It was bigger than this map over here.

Reti: Which takes up half of the wall of this conference room.

Farr: I couldn't say no because he was pulling it off the wall and saying, "Here," and hands this huge painting to me. You know.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: (laughs) When I first looked at it, I thought it looked like a palm tree having a nuclear explosion, just being blown to bits through the center of a palm tree. It was really weird. Modern art.

Reti: (laughing)

Farr: (laughing) I said, "Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm really honored." So he takes it out and he says, "Well, let's show it to everybody else."

So I go out there to the delegation and they're all, "Where have you been? What's his office like?" They were always asking me those kinds of questions, "Tell us what it was like to meet with Castro." So I'm showing this and I'm saying, "Well, the delegation was just given this," and everybody is thanking Castro and everything. And then Castro asks me, he said, "What hotel were you staying at?" It was the Purple Onion or something like that, not the hotel that I had stayed in before. It wasn't the Nacional, which is the famous one. And he says, "Well, I'll have my staff box it all up and bring it over to your hotel."

So everybody said, "How are you going to get that back?" I said, "I don't know."

Reti: That's what I was wondering. (laughs)

Farr: "I'll just put it in the airplane." It was a huge crate. They brought over this huge crate. It took two people to lift it because the wood was so heavy. The painting wasn't, but the wood was.

And I got to the Miami airport and you've got to schlep your stuff through customs. We were transferring to another plane to go to Washington. I got it through customs without problems. There are no restrictions on Cuban art, only cigars and rum. After I got it through customs everybody said, "Well, we've got to decide where this painting is going to go?" I said, "What do you mean, *you're* going to decide? You guys gave me so much crap about how big it was, made me schlep it all the way up from Havana. I'm head of the delegation. You wouldn't have gotten the painting without me. It's my painting and I'm giving it to UC Santa Cruz. There is going to be none of this, "We're going to decide."

It was so big, I couldn't take it to my apartment. So I just left it at United in Dulles Airport for a week, until I took a United flight home. I had asked United baggage if they could keep it in the locker room because I was going to fly to San Francisco that weekend.

But that trip to Cuba was fun. We had dinner with Castro. After an evening visit with him, he goes, "What would you like to eat?" It's like one in the morning! Yeah, we're kind of hungry. But he never stops talking. You can interrupt him and he may answer your question, or he may just keep talking. But he never asks for opinions. If he does, he answers them. He gives an answer before he hears yours. Like he did ask, he said, "We're really struggling with teenage pregnancies because the teenage girls are dropping out of school. And we want them to be in school and finish. What have you found in the United States to encourage teenage pregnant girls to stay in school? We found that the only thing that works here is paying them money." So before he even got an answer, he said, "This is what we have done." But I think he was sincere in wanting to know if anybody had any better ideas. The only ideas we could come up with is, that's what we do. Create special programs. It costs money.

Reti: What happened to the painting? Is it at UC Santa Cruz?

Farr: It was out at the University Center. I don't know if it's still there. The artist was well known in Cuba and someone connected to UCSC had done a paper on the artist, so I felt it found a good home, thanks to Fidel Castro. Those are fun little stories.ⁱⁱⁱ

Colombia

Reti: Yes! And Colombia. You have also done work with Colombia.

Farr: Well, Colombia I owe everything to, because I was a Peace Corps volunteer there, and I learned Spanish there, and fell in love with the Latin culture. And it opened up all these doors, whether it be Cuba or other places I've been, Central America and South America. I'd love to continue in that realm somehow.

I got a nice tribute a couple of weeks ago. The Colombian embassy threw me a farewell party, "Congratulations and thank you for your public service." And it was really touching because embassies just don't throw parties for single members of Congress. They had about 150 people there and some of them I hadn't seen since my Peace Corps days. It was really, really touching. They brought in a Colombian band. It was when Colombia was playing Chile in the soccer playoffs, so there was a big screen. And then they interrupted everything by saying, "We have a special message from Bogotá that we want to play for you." And it was the president of Colombia, Colombia's President Santos, who I adore. He did a really nice tribute for all of my work in the Peace Corps and work in Congress, helping Colombia, and lots of other stuff. It was really touching.

I've always felt that the way you help people is to empower them, teach them—you know, the old Biblical term: "teach them to fish." Instead of giving them a fish, teach them to fish. That was my Peace Corps role—empowerment through urban community development; listen to the people, encourage them to act on

their problems, make connections. It all starts with listening, as we learned in training, listening to “the felt needs of the host country natives.” Then act on it.

In Congress, we had this foreign aid program called “Plan Colombia.” It was all that money that we thought was being spent to help Colombia, this aid that we thought was going to Colombia. But when I drilled down to see what Colombian agencies were getting the money, I found it never got that far. It went to American consultants helping Colombia get American weapons, because the Colombian army wanted American-made weapons.

I really got upset, especially when I saw the costs of spraying the cocoa crops with American planes and pilots. The State Department had contracted with American companies to come down there. But Colombia was the first country in the Western hemisphere to have a commercial airline service. They flew these biplanes, these float planes up the Magdalena River. They were Colombian pilots, or European pilots living in Colombia. Colombia is a mountainous country, much of it only accessible by plane, usually air taxis that can fly into these small mountain villages that are really hard to get to. It’s just common. It’s been this way for years and years. So they’ve got tremendous pilots. Avianca is one of the oldest airlines in the Western hemisphere and very well thought of as a professional airline.

So we bring in these Americans who are flying spray planes, you know. And I thought, well, when are you going to turn these over to the Colombians? (If spraying was an effective method, which we found it wasn’t.) And the American companies kept saying, “Oh, this is very—this is high risk. We can’t find pilots to

do it.” I said, “What do you mean, you can’t find pilots to do it? There are pilots in this country that would work for half the price you’re paying American pilots and be better at the job.”

Reti: Yeah. And they’re very skilled.

Farr: Yes, they’re very skilled. Whenever I saw American foreign policy that wasn’t working on empowerment— Frankly, one of the things I missed that would have loved to do in Congress is to try to convince the Foreign Affairs Committee to develop boiler plate language that every contract we let out to American companies to help with foreign aid—like infrastructure building, roads and sewers and dams, and whatever it is our companies are going to build on, add a component into that contract that asks, “How is that company going to teach the host country nationals to do it themselves next time?” Empowerment is about letting Colombians do the work, not American companies. Next time [empower Colombians to do the work] in their country, rather than having foreigners come in and not leave much money there, just take it all out.

This idea about empowerment runs through my blood. I wanted to see it happen. I realized from my Peace Corps work that even people in poverty need security. If they’re going to get robbed walking out of their house, or threatened, you can’t get them to go to school, or do things they ought to be doing if they are living in fear. So you need to have the security. And the military and national police can do that as long as they’ve been properly vetted and trained.

You know, there is a lot of corruption in developing countries. In Colombia, the national police are pretty good, but their military has been awful. And that was

part of the point of the plan in Colombia, to clean all that up, to vet people and make sure they didn't have violent backgrounds before they got in the military, and stuff like that. And I'd say in that regard, the Colombians did a phenomenal job. I mean, the Colombian military is now so well trained by us that they're respected all over the world. They were fighting with us in Afghanistan. Certainly, Afghanistan is a drug country. They know about drug culture and Colombians know how to deal with the violence it creates and also the politics.

Reti: Well, there was just a major agreement in Colombia in the last few weeks.

Farr: Yes. This just shows the ability of Colombia's leadership to really sit down and negotiate. The violence in Colombia is the longest civil war in modern history, in the world. The Colombians probably lost about 250,000 people in that war: Colombians killing Colombians; family members killing other family members. Everybody has been burnt by it and hurt by it. If you think about how many people we lost in Vietnam, which was about 55,000 soldiers—they've lost 250,000 people—men, women, and children. They are just sick and tired of the violence.

Reti: And in a much smaller country.

Farr: To construct peace accords, first you've got to get both sides to say "It's time." So to work out to how you're going to give up arms. It's one thing if you're a foreign country and we've defeated you and you've got to go home—or whatever—we're going to draw a line and build a wall and you're going to be locked on the other side. But Colombia didn't divide the country. They got the guerillas to agree to give up their arms and sort of walk into the town plaza and

not be shot at, and not be thrown in jail with the key thrown away. The guerillas needed to have some hope for a better life, through going back to school, getting a job, a place to live, a place for their kids to call home. Now they're going to work out all these things. They're going to have a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Colombia is going to do it the right way and probably better than any peace accords have ever been done.

I've been reading this agreement. I think it's the most modern, well-thought-out, and detailed way of ending violence and promising hope, with discipline. So you don't just commit heinous murders and get to go live in a penthouse the rest of your life. You're going to have to go do something to pay restitution. But instead of being executed, or being jailed for the rest of your life, you might have to do public service for the rest of your life, or for a number of years. Otherwise, why should they lay down their arms? It's got to be a better life for them than guerilla life. It can't be worse. If it's going to be worse, they're not going to give up their jungle life and guerilla life. Colombia has been able to write marvelous peace accords. I hope we study them and hear a lot about it. It gives the world hope that—with all of these atrocities in the Middle East, between the Sunnis and the Shiites and vice versa, ISIS and all of those cultural, internal hates can be put aside, like they did in Colombia.

Now the people of Colombia have to vote on it, I think on October 19. So the next couple of weeks is going to be really intense in Colombia because the former president of Colombia, President Uribe, doesn't like the peace accords because not every one of these people who did something bad is going to go to jail or get a severe penalty. So he's using all his political influence as the former president

of the country to defeat the peace accord, which the government promised the people that they would bring back to the people to vote on. So they have to have an up or down vote on it. And it's going to be really tight and very tense. I think a lot of the conservatives in Congress don't like it either. They just want an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Those demands cannot be accepted. And I respect that. But in the end, it has to be implemented.ⁱⁱⁱ

Obamacare

Reti: So, in 2008, Barack Obama gets elected president. And one of the first big issues and debates is comprehensive health reform.

Farr: Well, the history of health care delivery in America really goes back to the post-Depression. I think it was in 1935 that Congress adopted Social Security. And the question at the time about Social Security was: what are you going to do about people's medical problems? And the answer was, "We just don't have enough money to do that. We're just going to take care of having basic financial needs, pay for rent and food and board, and keep people off the streets, non-working senior citizens. And we don't have money to do extra for Medicare." It wasn't until, I think 1965, under the Johnson administration and the War on Poverty, that they came up with the Medicare program.^{iv} And the question then was, well, that is only going to cover health care for senior citizens. It isn't going to really take care of the rest of the population. The whole population needs the services.

Again, "We don't have the money to do it." Almost every Congress has struggled with: how do we broaden the pool of people who can't afford to get

access to medicine? We need to have a healthy society. And there's always been a pushback that says, "We don't have enough money." When anybody has tried to raise taxes to do it, it's just never happened.

The crunch part, the thing that really got to be severely broken, was the fact that healthcare costs in America had been escalating every year, beyond the rate of inflation, to the point where economists were really worried that healthcare in America was going to eat up all the costs of government. Essentially, that's all you could do. You wouldn't be able to have an army anymore. You'd just have to pay for people's health care. If we didn't change it.

There are all kinds of debates on how to change it. The models were there—the British model, the Socialist model, the Japanese model, and the German model, and so on. And all of those models just couldn't get the political acceptance in this country.

So they decided, our model is based on the private insurance model. We're going to keep it. But what we can do is require that everybody has to have insurance and that an insurance company can't exclude people by getting rid of people with preexisting conditions. Health care reform and the mandate would cover about fifty million people who didn't have insurance before. And if they don't have enough money, the government will do a means test on them and provide the money to buy that insurance policy. We'll subsidize it—it could be up to almost 100 percent. I think you have to put something in, no matter what, but for very low-income people, it was a small co-pay. So that was the issue of the universality.

The other sides' argument was, well, how are you going to bring down costs? Well, let's make it competitive. We're giving this whole new market of fifty million people; insurance companies will be happy to have fifty million new customers. Let's leave it up to the insurance companies to decide how to bring down costs and make it competitive among them. The guy with the best policy will win and be very successful.

The Republicans wouldn't buy into it at all. They have not come up with a solution ever since. They've been critical of it and voted against it and done everything they can to repeal it. But they have not had any solution. And the Office of Management and Budget says that this Obama plan we came up with over the next ten years will save two trillion dollars. So theoretically, if you repeal Obamacare, it's going to cost the government two trillion dollars more, unless you shift the cost to the sick to pay more.

Reti: And those costs are in people's health care?

Farr: The costs are in everything because of all kinds of factors. One is, you make it affordable; you have universal records; you bring down the administrative costs. You do electronic billing—you can do it faster. You see every patient to detect illness early, so they're not going to be as sick. So the wellness side of it—an ounce of prevention is cheaper than a pound of cure.

Obama was such a great orator on the campaign trail. I thought at the time that he ought to carry that oratory into the White House and start this nation afresh with explaining to them what are these big, huge problems in our country. Healthcare would be one. Education would be another. The economy would be

another. Foreign relations—what’s going on in the Middle East and why do we have all these alliances? The public knew there were problems, but not why and how to fix it. People won’t follow unless they understand. People didn’t understand. They knew it was broken, but they didn’t understand why it was broken. What do you mean by broken? Because with healthcare everybody has their own policy. I don’t know what kind of policy you have. I don’t know what you pay for it. I don’t know what company insures you. Those things are just never shared. So our knowledge about healthcare comes from our own experience, and that’s it. There is no understanding of why others aren’t insured. We have to have a national discussion in order to fix it. The minute you suggest a fix there are winners and losers, and people start ganging up on one side or another. And you have a debate and it can get very vociferous. And oftentimes it just gets nowhere because you get stuck. You can’t get the votes. So I thought Obama should explain to the nation: here’s the complications of health care in America. He didn’t do it, and then when he had his press conference he announced that he was going to weigh in on the healthcare solution. When they asked him the details, he said, “I’m not going to get into that. I’ll leave that up to Congress.” I think he had to say that because Hillary Clinton, in Bill’s first months in office, got into details and got eaten alive for it.

Reti: And he knew that very well.

Farr: So he said, “I’m not going to get criticized for details. Let’s just talk about the concept of universal healthcare for America. It sounds good to me. It sounds good to everybody. We’ll get into the specifics when they introduce the bill and we can debate it in committee then.”

And it ended up the Republicans did such a good job, as they did with Hillary, of killing it. We've seen how good they are at doing negative campaigning. They just jumped all over this thing and they got the American people really scared. We went home that August, and the Democrats were encouraged. We thought this was going to be a great thing. We were doing the hardest thing Congress has ever done, and that's plan universal access to healthcare. How exciting.

Well, we didn't realize that these groups were set up to sabotage our town hall meetings, and throw more confusion in front of everybody at home, and make their congressman look embarrassed. I think I said here we had our first meeting at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. I was having dinner across the street with the mayor before we walked over to the auditorium. And the chief of police came in and he said, "We've got some real problems here. Congressman, do you want to move the meeting down to the convention center?" I said, "Why?" and he said, "Because we have about six or seven hundred people out there. And there's only room for about 100-150 in the auditorium. We're worried about riots breaking out. We've called in our officers and they are in the streets and they're trying to calm things down. But that auditorium won't handle it." I said, "Well, what do *you* think we should do?" And he said, "Well, frankly, I think you just ought to go ahead with it. I think we can maintain order."

Reti: Right there?

Farr: At the auditorium. "We'll put as many people in there as the fire marshal will allow and the school said they will put in some speakers so people can listen

to it in the hallways.” So I said, “I’m willing to do that.” And that’s when the Tea Party bussed in a lot of these people who got up and just read their questions. And they didn’t care what the answer was because the question was a gotcha question.

But I realized really quickly—and I study all this stuff and I’ve been at it a long time, the ability to think on your feet—I realized, my god, you know what’s wrong in this room? Nobody understands healthcare. So I sort of had to do this thing: “How many of you have health insurance?” Three-quarters of the people in the room raised their hand. I said, “You know what? This bill doesn’t affect you at all, unless you have that very expensive healthcare policy because you have a preexisting condition and the only way you can get health insurance is to pay double or triple. You’ll be helped because we’re getting rid of that.” “But,” I said, “for three-quarters of you nothing changes”—and then you hear people say, “You’re a liar. That’s not true.” (laughs)

But then I had to divide it up—because I know people who have health insurance from the state of California, or the county of Monterey don’t realize that we’re all in the same pool in California. Everybody in public service at the local or state level is in one big pool, whereas the federal government is a different pool. And the private sector doesn’t have a pool, except if you’re a company and you sell insurance to 500 employees, then you’ve got a pool.

So it was quite a learning lesson on how to talk to crowds. I think by the end, people came up to me and they were amazed. “How did you do that? How did you keep that whole crowd from breaking into a riot? You had some ugly people

there." And what I did was to use the crowd against the person that's being really ugly. When they're yelling and they won't shut up, or their time is up, you just say, "Everybody here came to be courteous and listen to everybody else. It's the American way. Are you going to let this one individual disrupt your chance to speak? Should I adjourn the meeting? Because we can't go on like this." And the room would turn on that individual: "Sit down and shut up. You've had your turn."

Reti: How do you keep your cool internally?

Farr: You kind of explain to them their ignorance without saying, (laughs) "You are so full of lies and insanity that I don't know how you exist." I guess that is what you are thinking internally. I did stuff like, for example, they would say, "The bill says this," so I'd have the bill on stage. I'd have my staff with me and I'd go out there and find a podium and I'd put the bill on it. I'd just leave it there. I didn't even stand behind the podium. You have to move around just to keep the people's attention. I'd have a microphone. I'd keep the bill. I'd mark the bill. I'd read the whole thing. Someone would say, "You haven't read the bill." I'd say, "I've read it all. Here it is." I'd tell them how many pages it was. "You can't read all that!" I'd say, "Well, I've been doing legislation for about fifteen years. I used to write bills like this. I certainly can read it."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I think at one of the meetings [someone said], "This is the longest bill in the history of Congress. Nobody has ever read it. It's a mess. You can't do legislation

like this.” So I’d bring out the Defense Authorization Bill, which is twice as big as the healthcare bill—

Reti: (laughing)

Farr: And I said, “Um, we just voted for this. None of you ever asked me whether we read it. Did you even know we were voting on it? It’s twice the size of the healthcare bill. We do this every year!” You know, show them some visuals. One example heard at every town hall: “Well, every illegal immigrant can get healthcare in this bill. That’s not fair.” I said, “Well, that’s just totally wrong.” “No, it isn’t,” they’d say. I said, “On page 147 it says” and I’d read the language. “It seems to me, clear enough. Nobody can get healthcare insurance unless you are a legal resident.” So it’s just little techniques. And the room supported me because not everybody there was there to disrupt it.

There were people who really bothered me. There was an African American with a sign with Obama with a Hitler moustache. I saw him when I walked in and I thought, boy, oh boy, he doesn’t know what he’s into. And you know what is interesting (because the chief of police told me this—he said, “You know that guy who is carrying that sign? There was a little old lady from Monterey who went up to him and showed him her [number]. [chokes up] She said, ‘I *was* in a Nazi camp. Here’s my number. Don’t ever. Don’t ever put that sign up in this country. You don’t know what you’re talking about, young man. You should be ashamed of yourself!’” There were a lot of powerful moments in those town hall meetings.

I think people learned a lot and I think that's what sustained the audience, why they didn't run me off the rails. Some other congressmembers couldn't handle it. They couldn't handle the pressure, so they would cancel the meetings and then cancel having them. I had more. I said, "I'm going to go to every county." I went to north and south [Monterey] county. I think probably the most opposition came when I had it in King City. Hollister was really interesting because there was a huge turnout, the biggest there had ever been in Hollister for anything. We had it in the armory there. I remember one kid got up; he had a really cocky style. He talked about how he rode motorcycles, and he said he was mad at the government for requiring him to wear a helmet. You know, "We're the last stand of freedom in America. We're the real bearers of independence and freedom that this whole country stood for." He got ovations for all that and he said, "I'm not going to let the government tell me that I've got to have an insurance policy." I said, "Well, I'd be glad to answer that question." And he said, "I don't even want to hear your answer," and he starts walking out.

It was a big room and I said, "Well, just a minute, sir. If you go out that door right now—and you don't want to wear that helmet—and you get into an accident, and you get taken over here to Hazel Hopkins Emergency Room and you're operated on tonight to save your life because you have a real serious head injury, you may stay in that hospital for months. Do you think every taxpayer in this room should be paying your bill because of your foolishness?" And the room that had applauded him for his independence speech turned around and just: "No! No! You shouldn't be that foolish. We shouldn't have to pay your bill!" I said, "Well, that's what it's all about. Don't you think he ought to pay

something? Don't you think he should have insurance, especially if he rides a motorcycle?"

Reti: Ooh!

Farr: Because they didn't understand what the bill was all about. In fact, a couple of people came up afterwards and said, "Boy, you just noticed the room switch because they began to understand, okay, this isn't just about me. It's about other things that I didn't know were out there."

And the cost of healthcare. I think we're at about 13 percent of GDP right now. The economists were saying that if we didn't change the path we were on, that we were going to end up with about 25 percent of the GDP spent on healthcare. No other country in the world has to spend that much. Our competitors—the Japans; the Germanys of the world, Englands—they will not have to spend so much of the GDP on health care. They're going to spend that money on research and brain power. And they'll just eat our seed corn. They'll be the countries that will be leading the economic engine of the world, not America. We'll be too busy drowning in our healthcare costs. So health care reform is essential to economic survival in this county. Unless we rein in costs, we'll get screwed.

On the political side, which is very interesting—the way you make legislation in Washington, particularly all major legislation, is the House goes through all the details and comes up with their own version. Think about two people writing a paper on a given subject matter. And the Senate does it independently of the House and comes up with their paper on the subject matter and each passes their version. And then you put the two into a conference committee and you pick the

best parts of both. The agreed upon conference committee report returns to each house for final approval. That's how it's supposed to work. Both houses have to agree with every word and every comma. That's it. That's the final draft. And that's the final bill that goes to the president and he signs it. Well, politically what happened with the health care bills is the Senate acted first and just didn't get into as many details, hadn't thought about as many things as the House had. There were mistakes made, in their judgment, which obviously we were going to correct in our bill. But we were a lot later than the Senate in being able to get the bill to pass. We only got up to 218 after a huge struggle, a huge struggle to get those votes.

But then what happened is Senator [Ted] Kennedy died. And the Senate said, "You know what? We cannot go to conference with these two bills because we don't have enough votes now to adopt the conference report. So all of this effort is dead. The only way left you can do this is the House must pass the Senate bill, flawed as it is." And then try to figure out how we can pass a supplemental bill to fix it. But that was going to be difficult because the votes were still not there.

So we had to adopt the Senate bill, and to this day those flaws are the problems of the healthcare bill. And normally—this isn't unusual when you are doing major legislation—normally you have your fight; you have your vote; one side wins or the other. And then the next year you are moving on to other things and you always have to pass what they call a cleanup bill. We passed the rough draft, but now we see mistakes, and let's now correct our errors and get it all done well. And normally those things are addressed in the cleanup bill without

controversy because you've already had the battle on the issue. Cleanup is the technical way to address flaws.

A good example of that is when the Republicans proposed the Medicare Part D, which was very partisan, very controversial—Part D subsidized the pharmaceutical companies, who would in turn reduce the costs of medicine for low-income senior citizens. So you subsidized the industry, in order to subsidize the poor. Very awkward. We've never had a middleman in place like that before because Medicare—the government doesn't have a middleman. We pay the doctor for the patient who needs the help. The Democrats were opposed to the Republican version because it was just a big boondoggle for the pharmaceutical companies. We also projected that it would have huge cost overruns. Both things happened and we lost. They had the votes. The Republicans won—you have Medicare Part D.

The next year there were problems that right away the Republicans saw. They put in a cleanup bill and all the Democrats voted for it. Essentially, we said, "Well, we lost that war. We're glad that senior citizens have access to pharmaceutical drugs. We just didn't think that the method they chose was the right one. But it's the law now and let's make it work." But we did it without trying to repeal it, or block it, or anything. But the Republicans have used Obamacare or the Affordable Care Act [ACA] to just say no—as a political weapon. They've been very, very effective at it. Problems exist they won't fix. The worst thing that could happen is to repeal it. There's a lot more good than bad in it and the bad can easily be fixed.

Reti: The party of no.

Farr: The party of no. And you know, it's got them re-elected. So, we'll see. (pause) I'm really disappointed when a responsible legislative body fails to be intellectually honest about the process. I think it really hurts all Americans. I think that's what's happening right now. The institution is not living up to its responsibility, not just expectations, but what we were created for.

But I'll tell you, [Obamacare] would never have happened without Nancy Pelosi because Barack was ready to throw in the towel and do a compromise bill. He already gave up on what we thought was very important, which was what we called the "public option." The public option was set up to have everyone covered if insurance companies didn't make the price affordable, "Okay, this bill is going to require every person to buy insurance." And the reason that was chosen is that methodology was already in place. It's in the Medicare model. It's in all the insurance policies. We weren't getting to get out of having insurance cover the costs of medicine. What we were going to do was have a safety net so every patient is covered. Universal coverage means providers get paid. So you wouldn't have all these unpaid bills to hospitals, or that go into charity, and somebody has to pick up the bill. And frankly, the care you get is all professional, whether it's neurosurgery or alcohol treatment, drug treatment—neonatal, whatever it is, everybody is on the inside and their medical bills will be covered by an insurance company.

Well, the question was, well, what if these insurance companies just don't bring down their prices so that you can afford them? Well, we already worked that out

by saying we'll subsidize it. But what if, even with the subsidies to you, the individual who is buying the policy, it's not enough. Why don't we create an additional leg to the stool, another path called the public option, meaning that the government will create an insurance company. The insurance companies go crazy about that but we already have government-subsidized insurance. We do that with flood insurance and stuff like that. What is done, is the government sets up an insurance company that has to live by all the standards of an insurance company, just like you were a private company. Only the government does not have shareholders, stockholders. So the government does not have to make a profit.

Reti: So why would you—and that would be competing with the other—

Farr: That would compete with the insurance companies. It would also give them an incentive to be competitive.

Reti: Oh. I can see why they wouldn't like that idea. (laughs)

Farr: No. But to get to the goal of having universal insurance, because now it's going to be affordable, you only get that—you couldn't go out there and say, "Well, I'm making a good salary. And I'm not going to buy Blue Cross because I can go buy the public option." The only people who would qualify for the public option would be the people who *didn't* have enough money to qualify for the private sector. So we weren't really competing with the private sector. We are just picking up the leftovers. I still think that was a great idea and Obama killed it. I mean, it really disappointed the Democrats that he did that.

Reti: And he killed it because there was so much opposition.

Farr: Yeah, that was just one of those things—you know, socialized medicine—that people couldn't accept. I think when you looked at the marketing of it all and looked at what the end goal was—to have 100 percent coverage—and the advantage to the providers, the doctors, the nurses, everything that your comprehensive insurance policy covers—the health care professionals don't mind giving you the services because they are going to get paid for it.

The way the law existed before was that hospitals could reject you because you didn't have any insurance. They'd say, "You go next door. You go to the county hospital, the public hospital." Here on the Peninsula it was, "You go over to Salinas." If it's an emergency and you need emergency care for a life and death situation, they have to take you. But if you break your bone, you're not going to get it set up here. You're going to get it set over in Salinas. If that person is insured, everybody is equal walking into that door. But uninsured patients with elective issues have to go someplace else. We were trying to eliminate this hierarchy of medical care depending on your income. You're *all* covered. Universality is what makes it. And universality is also what brings down the costs because you've got a huge pool. And it's a competitive pool. You get to choose the insurance you want to buy. The government doesn't tell you who to buy it from.

And single payer would also bring down the cost. Single payer is what we have with Medicare. People don't really understand what it means. Single payer means that you pay your Medicare premiums through your payroll taxes. Most

people pay them. Most people pay for their Medicare in their salaries. If you are self-employed, you pay through your federal taxes. That goes into a government pool. And when you decide you need healthcare, you go find the doctor to treat you. The government has nothing to do with that. But the government pays the bill, instead of an insurance company, who fights with the doctor and fights with the patient to bring down costs for them. Less costs, more profit.

Reti: So the government becomes the single payer, as there are no stockholders so it doesn't have to make a profit.

Farr: Yes. That's what happens. And that's what we thought ought to be. Eventually, I think we'll get to that. Insurance companies will still get the business because the government contracts with the insurance companies to pay the Medicare bills. They may have a financial provider, a company that does financial services that we contract with. I mean, Tricare is a public insurance policy for the military and we contract with a major provider to provide the insurance. The contract to manage Tricare is bid every five years to a private insurance company. The payment is in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Now that is real money that insurance companies compete for.

So all the reforms that are in Obamacare will eventually become standardized and broadened. Because going back is too expensive. And that's why the Republicans haven't been able to come up with an alternative plan because they know that they'd have to have it analyzed by the Office of Budget and others before they can present it and get a fiscal analysis of it. And nothing that they

have suggested, by just going back to the old ways, saves the government any money.^{iv}

Reti: Because then we're back to that two trillion dollars that you were talking about.

Farr: Full repeal, no replace, or removing restrictions on insurance companies will cost taxpayers over two trillion dollars.

Reti: And you were saying that Nancy Pelosi was very effective—

Farr: She insisted with Obama: "Don't compromise. Don't cave in. We want the whole enchilada. Look it, I'm getting the votes. We're sacrificing people's lives to get these votes. This is the most important piece of legislation in decades. No Congress, no president, has ever been able to accomplish this. This is going to be accomplished on your watch and it's going to be meaningful, not some mediocre, half-assed attempt." All the people around the White House were saying, "I don't think we can get there." Nancy just said, "This is my job. I'll get the votes."

And she did it. Nobody else could have done that. Nobody. Because she had so much respect. Because she's raised so much money. Because she's very good at convincing people. There were people who lost their seats in Congress because of that vote. But when they came back, and we were all in tears, every one of them got up in the lame duck, before the new people came in and said, "You know, the saddest day in my life is losing my seat in Congress. But the proudest day in my life was the day I voted for this bill. So I'd do it all over again, if my vote made the difference." And it did. Those are profiles in courage.

Although some of these people who lost also held out so long that they alienated their Democratic base.

Reti: So then that's more complicated—

Farr: So it's not just the vote. It's the style in which you got into the vote.

Immigration

Reti: So let's talk about immigration now.

Farr: Well, immigration is a huge problem. Most people don't really understand how complicated it is. And basically, we've adopted throughout history quotas of how many people to allow in from each country every year. And countries that have huge populations that have easy access to the United States financially can get in, or they have ties here, have been coming in sort of underground for years. Mexico is our neighbor, and our border represents the greatest difference between rich and poor in the world, the border that can demonstrate the difference between San Diego and Tijuana and there it is: both cities of millions of people. The border between the United States and Mexico, particularly the border between California and Mexico, is the busiest border in the world. More people, more commerce, goes across those borders than any border in the world. And again, the difference there is the difference between rich on one side of the border and poor on the other. I like to tell people that if somebody came to you and said, "I guarantee you that if you make this investment, I will guarantee you that you will get five times return on your investment." What person wouldn't take that? So the question is, "What do I have to do?" "Well, you're standing here

in Mexico and you're working in a store here. If you just cross this line, and you're in the United States on the other side, doing that same job, you'll get paid five times more."

So there is the draw. And we've been unable to keep them out. We've gotten much better at it. I mean, the wall that Trump now wants to build has already been built. They've built it at all the places where people were crossing. You don't need to build that wall out in the middle of the desert because there is nobody really going out that far out to cross. It's just too remote. And then if you have something, you got to have somebody patrolling it. And the Border Patrol can tell you that we have radar and everything. We can detect. There aren't any people crossing those areas.

So it's not the fence that's the issue. It's really the fact that so many people cross, paying the coyotes thousands of dollars. But they don't go back as they used to. They know that they can easily get caught now. So we've got eleven million people that are living inside the United States, from not just Mexico, but a lot of other countries, that are here without papers. And obviously we always bring up: what about all the Canadians that are here illegally? Nobody knows they are Canadian because they don't look any different than all the other white people. And we don't have to build a wall with Canada. But there are people in Canada who come over.

So this problem has lingered for a long time and the question is: what do you do about it? Because when you're undocumented, you're living in shadows. In many ways, you live in as much fear—although you're not going to be hauled off

to concentration camps—but remember, not every Jew in Germany knew that there were concentration camps. They just knew that people were being detained. But that was enough fear to hide people and things like that. So what happens here is the minute you say, “You’re undocumented and you’re going to be deported,” people then don’t want to be seen. They kind of scoot around in the shadows. You’re always looking over your shoulder. I talk to people every day who think, “I can’t do anything because I might get deported.” Well, they don’t want to be visible because they might get deported, so live much of their life in an underground economy.

So we’ve got to settle this thing. A lot of these people have legitimate jobs and they’re married to American citizens. Deportation would be impossible. We’d have to have all of law enforcement round up people. And churches and families would say, “You can hide in my basement.” I mean, it’s just not going to happen.

So what do we do about it? We have solutions. There are essentially three big solutions. Okay, the conservative viewpoint is that the border is still too porous. Too many people get across and we need to tighten the border. And the Democrats are saying, “Well, if that’s what it takes to do the rest of it, we’ll throw more money at it.” Every president has thrown billions of dollars at the border. People who go down to the border say there is so much equipment down there, and there aren’t enough people to use it because the people can’t be hired, because they can’t hire them fast enough.

Reti: Are you talking about technological things like surveillance equipment?

Farr: Oh, yeah. Everything needs to be operated. I mean, we have spy satellites, we have drones, we have balloons, we have high-flying aircraft. We have helicopters, we have ground-detection sensitive instruments, we have long-distance radar. We have all those things. There isn't anything that is in the military intelligence, fact-gathering world that isn't on the border. And when I talk to the border patrol, they say, "Oh, my god. We can tell you when a rabbit crosses the border."

Reti: (whistles)

Farr: "We may not be able to get out in the remote areas really fast but we can see them on the radar. But it takes a half hour in a helicopter to fly out there and by that time they're gone. The problem we're having is that people are getting across that border and then getting dumped by the coyotes and left in the desert to starve. Because they didn't come with food. They don't know what direction to go. Where do you go? There's mountains all around you. You can get lost in the mountains."

So they actually have—and I've stopped at one of these things in a helicopter—they have these solar-operated telephones, public telephone post centers out in the middle of nowhere. And all it says is, "If you're in danger and need help, pick up this phone."

Reti: In Spanish?

Farr: In Spanish. And they will call into the Border Patrol and they will send out a helicopter to rescue you. And by then, when people are using that phone, they

can't wait to get rescued, even though they are going to get deported. They don't want to die. They call because they were left to die. Coyote got their money.

So the Border Patrol told me, "We're doing a lot more responses for medical help than we are for picking up people for crossing." Some of them still get across. But you're paying these coyotes five or six thousand dollars. Obviously, they've got to be paying some people on our side to—who know, maybe even the Border Patrol. The patrol has busted their own officers making deals with the smugglers. It goes like this: hey, if you just don't patrol this area during certain hours of the night, we'll give you some money. I'm sure our Border Patrol does all kinds of looking at people's bank accounts and stuff like that, to see that they are not committing criminal acts. But when you have so much money changing hands, you've got to think that somebody on our side has to be helping them.

A lot of people walk across the border because they have jobs or can legally shop on our side. Anybody who is a Mexican citizen, middle-class, not poor people, but anybody middle class can get, I don't know how many hours, I think it's a sixty-hour pass to go anywhere within ninety miles of the border. And a lot of people do have working permits. They live in Mexico but they work in the United States. They even have a FAST gate down on the border, so you can drive through because you're doing this legitimate commute. So there is a lot of legitimate transfer of people and goods all the time.

And one of the ways they were bribing the patrol is when they would have certain officers who would be on to check the IDs of people walking across—this is what I heard in one of the stories—they said, "Yeah, some of these guys would

get a bribe from the coyotes saying, 'Let every seventh person through without checking their ID.'" So nobody could really spot it easily. "And for that we'll put the illegals in there and just get them through." It's a huge business. We've got to clean it up.

So the Democrats are saying, okay, if you'll do the other two things—we do not like the word 'amnesty' but we'll forgive you for coming without papers as long as you pay a fine and show us that you've got a job and things like that, all the things that allow you to stay here. And the third is the Dreamers thing, allowing people who want to go to school to become legitimate. So what we were going to do in immigration reform is give these people, once you do a little bit of background checking and realize they're not criminals—now they say, check on taxes. I think it would be really hard to check on taxes. There's so much underground economy in the low-income world anyway. People don't report their income. They get paid in cash. There are no records, so how are you going to tell whether they owed income taxes? But that's one of the things the Republicans want to do and I think the IRS thinks that's going to be a little difficult.

But the theory is okay, you've been here and you haven't done anything wrong. They're going to give you a new card called a blue card or a purple card, instead of a green card. And that card says to anybody who stops you, I've got a pass. I'm not to be deported because I'm being processed. And that would take a couple of years. And then you'd be processed. The next step you would get a green card.

Reti: I see. So you would be on the path to citizenship—

Farr: Not necessarily citizenship. Remember, citizenship is voluntary. And citizenship requires that you have to have a green card without incident for five years. And then you yourself decide, oh, I'd like to give up my country and become an American citizen. That's hard for a lot of people, particularly Canadians. They don't see any reason why they should become American citizens. But other people are proud to be British or Australian or whatever—I'm sure in Latin American countries too.

But we need to take [away] the criminality, the fear of crime, the fear of deportation, of kids being deported during the school year, or a parent being deported. Also, when you are undocumented you can't leave this country for family emergencies back home. It's tragic. If your mother or father dies, your best friend or sister is getting married or something, or whatever the tragedy or happy celebration is, Christmas, you don't get to go. Because you can get over easily but you can't get back very easily. And if you try to go, even with a coyote, you can get caught. And you've got to pay the coyote a lot of money. Getting caught puts a lifetime ban on ever coming back to the United States, unless you waive all your rights to fight deportation. If waived, the ban is for ten years.

So I think that the way you make the immigration honest is you allow for some legitimacy of those that have come here without papers, giving them the ability to become—and I've talked to some of these guys over at Home Depot, in Spanish about this—because I was wondering how much they might be willing to pay for a fine. And they all understand and they know that they've committed

a crime by being undocumented. So I was asking them one day, "How much would you be willing to pay if Congress got to a point where this was one of the deciding issues, what should that fine be?" They were begging for what, ten or fifteen dollar an hour jobs in front of Home Depot, standing and waiting for somebody to hire them.

And I was shocked. They were kind of talking and laughing a little bit about it. They said, "Are you going to turn me in?" I said, "No, I don't even know who you are. I don't even know your names. I'm just curious. I'm a congressman and I want to know." And one of the guys said, "Oh, you know how much we pay a coyote?" I said, "I don't know, what? Five thousand?" He said, "Now it's about up to seven thousand. We'd pay that." I said, "Seven thousand dollars if you could become legal? How are you going to afford that?" And he said, "The same way we afforded the coyote. You get help from your family and your friends. Most of us here at least have some connection with somebody. And we're good workers. That's why we want to be hired. We work hard. We think we could find people that would help us. Becoming legal is *the* most important thing in our lives. It's not whether we ever become citizens. *We want to be legal.*"

In this day and age, it's just, to me, a criminal deed not to help people who so badly want to be legal, who want to be legit. And Congress, for all kinds of petty political reasons won't take the bills up. And yet, if those bills came to the floor, they would pass, not overwhelmingly, but they would pass well because there would be enough Republicans who would join Democrats in voting for them.

Reti: So that's left a situation where Obama has had to use executive orders.

Farr: He's doing everything he possibly could. And they are even suing him in court on that and saying he doesn't have the constitutional authority to issue those executive orders. Obama is a smart constitutional lawyer. I think he's done his homework and will prevail.

It took us about ten years to mature as a society for gay marriages. I think we are maturing as a society and beginning to realize a lot of these things that people never thought about before. I didn't know that people couldn't go back across the border. I didn't know all the stuff that they do, honestly, how much they contribute to society. In fact, now studies have shown that the undocumented worker here leaves more money in the United States than the costs of having them be illegal. They're paying into Social Security, but they're not collecting it. They're paying into Medicare, but the clinic that's seeing them is probably not collecting their Medicare. And there are a lot of these folks that I've heard about from different realtors around here who, even though they're undocumented, have had the wherewithal to buy homes.

Reti: In Monterey?

Farr: In Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. One of the realtors in Watsonville was telling me that before the prices went haywire, "There was the sweetest couple. They worked in the canneries all their lives. They were just sweet. They were elderly people. I got them in an entry-level house. And they came to me one day and they said, 'How are we doing?' They were making all their payments. They had no idea about financial instruments or equity. So I showed them how they could take money out of that account on their house and get an equity loan

so they could buy a car. They were so excited. And that house was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars more than they paid for it. I got them into a better home. And they're on their third home now. They're now millionaires. They have not changed their lifestyle one iota. They go to the canneries every single day. They just drive a nicer car to work. And that's all they've gotten out of it. I said they could quit the canneries, sell the house, and live on their gains for the rest of their lives." Those are the kinds of people you want around. You want them in the real estate market: honest, hard-working people.

I think the most important thing that Congress could do would be to pass comprehensive immigration reform. And I am so angry with Trump. Listening to him last night I couldn't even—I just—I'm didn't want to break my own television set but I was angry enough to.

Reti: Oh, Sam.

Farr: He just was so pathetic, so full of lies, and just fanning the flames of stuff that is just not true. And people believe him because he's in this big position. We're not moving forward on immigration reform with a leader like him. We're moving backwards. I think it's criminal. It's—I mean, he's a Nazi. He's awful. He's doing the same thing that Hitler did about the Jews, just scaring the people about Mexicans.

Reti: So for future readers of this oral history, yesterday Trump went to Mexico to meet with the president, and also he gave a speech in Arizona about immigration.^{lv}

Farr: Well, he did that to cover his butt before he made his first big policy speech. But it was a poorly written speech. It was factually incorrect and he even lied about what went on in Mexico, according to the president.

Reti: About asking for money for the wall. But he never actually asked for it.

Farr: Well, the Mexican president told him, “We’re not paying for that wall.” Straight out. It wasn’t that they had a dialogue or anything. He said, “We’re not paying for that.” But Trump came home and said, “We didn’t even talk about it. We’re going to work that out later. Just trust me. We’re going to work that out later.”

First of all, a president can’t unilaterally build a wall. Congress has to appropriate the money and Congress will never appropriate the money, because it’s a waste, because the people on the Border Patrol will tell you, “We don’t need a wall across the entire border from San Diego all the way to Corpus Christi.” That border is longer than the flight from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. There’s a lot of areas there where people just don’t exist and don’t cross. There are areas where we *are* wanting to build a wall and we have the money to do it and we don’t need more. So, I—ah—don’t even get me on that.

Reti: What has created the space for someone like Trump to become the Republican candidate for president?

Farr: A lot of people smarter than I are trying to analyze that. I mean, nobody that I know, no thinking person, Republican or Democrat, particularly Republicans, thought Trump would ever pass the first cut. And he’s had us, and

he's done it in such unconventional ways, so politically inappropriate ways, so alien to just the rules of courtesy.

I don't know. I think what he's been able to capture is—a term that I heard Bill Clinton use that I thought was very appropriate. He said, “Modern societies all over the world are going through a historical moment of “road rage,” of just getting really angry at the situation and wanting to lash out at it, without their lashing out being rational. It is irrational.”

Reti: So he's capturing that anger.

Farr: Yes, that anger. And sometimes he's planning on people thinking they need to be angry when they've never thought about that. What I think is the real underlying cause, is he's capturing the marketing of fear, which America has done better than anybody, at our own peril. Because when I talk to people overseas, and I was really shocked to hear this, I talked to several people, particularly in the Middle East, who say that the world image of the United States is that it's the most violent country in the world. “You assassinate presidents. We don't do that in our own country. You assassinate black people, brown people, Muslim people, people who look like Muslim people. You *kill* people in the streets. And besides, we know all that because we've seen all your movies, and you kill everybody in your movies.” People around the world really believe that. We don't think people believe that. The belief that America is the most violent country in the world is pretty prominent around the world.

I think Trump is playing right into that, making this false perception of America a reality of America. I think when we do that, we don't win friends and influence

people. And you can't be a world leader if you're not making a lot of friends. Because those are the people you trade with. Those are the people who you develop your security alliances with. And Trump is doing nothing to show any interest in any other country, or willingness to work to help solve mutual problems with other countries. He wants to build a fence around America, isolate us. And the problem is then we find—well, this is what I predict will happen if he's elected—first of all, thank God Congress won't let him do it all. But he'll still be saying these things. He'll be giving signals, and if he's elected, people are going to read that as a marketing message to other dissidents in other countries, at least the dissidents who are Trump-like, who will then challenge their governments, saying, "If they can do it in America, we can do it here."

So this road rage, or instantaneous backlash will start spreading. And what happens out of that is then people say, "We don't need to have our alliances with America." Countries like Brazil that are the third or fourth largest country in the world, we barely even know they exist. They've done all this without us. So you've got these countries, India and so on, maybe they just realize, "We don't need America as part of our menu. We can develop other trading partners." That will really hurt us because we make a hell of lot more than we can consume in this country. We've got to sell it somewhere. And you can only sell it to people who have good strong middle-class economies and disposable incomes.

I think Trump steps on everything that's great about America and puts us into a dark cloud. God forbid it should happen, that he gets elected. I think there also will be riots in American streets because I think people will be so angry with him

if he keeps his bullying tactics. There will be a lot of civil unrest. That's my prediction.

Gun Control

Reti: So recently there was the first ever House sit-in, an unofficial House filibuster (I know the House doesn't have filibusters), with John Lewis as the leader. And the issue was doing something about gun control. I know this has been an issue that has been debated for a long time.

Farr: Well, I'm just reading a book called *The Second Amendment: A Biography*. I wish every politician would read it because it really makes sense. It's not biased. It essentially just points out that when the Second Amendment was adopted, it wasn't any big deal. I mean, people don't remember that we didn't have a standing army when we became a nation. We had the colonies, who had their sort of state militias. And the state militia was made up of volunteers, although the states would expect that the young men would be part of the militia. The colonies didn't have big arms buying, so the militia volunteer would bring their own weapon. They had sort of preferred weapons, organized with private weapons.

So the Second Amendment says, "In order to have a well-established militia, comma." So it is all about state militias, not about openly carrying guns down the street. It was never an important amendment until the dialogues that started about the 1970s and 1980s, when, as this book points out, the NRA was taken over. The NRA was the National Rifle Association and was about gun safety practices for hunters, it was a hunter safety program. I remember, as a Boy Scout,

all the literature we got was from the NRA talking about gun safety. Nobody was talking about pistols in those days because you didn't hunt with pistols. It was all about rifle safety, hunting safety. And the NRA instructors would teach the course. They weren't a political lobby. They were an organization of people wanting to have proper protocols for how to have a weapon and use it safely.

But the gun manufacturers were feeling that there weren't enough gun sales in America, and realized that this NRA entity was a really good grassroots organization and it had a network around the country. No use trying to duplicate it. So what they did is they took over the board of directors of the NRA, and shifted it from a gun safety training program to a gun sales program. And in order to get increasing gun sales you had to make sure people were afraid. They weren't afraid of animals attacking them. They were afraid of bad people, burglars and so on. So, you could assure people that there was enough evil out there that the answer to that is having your own gun so you can feel safe and secure.

They did an amazing job of taking the grassroots organization that the historical NRA had built up and turning it into this foaming advocacy for guns. It's not about gun safety anymore. It's about the sale of guns. And that politic has fit. I think they generate the fear factor, and then they feed into that fear factor by suggesting that the way to be safe is to have a gun. So they're not only promoting the fear, but they're responding to it materially. And then they make a lot of money selling these guns.

It's gotten so kooky and crazy with assault weapons and all kinds of automatic fire weapons that states have been taking action. California is way ahead of the federal government in all the gun safety programs. They banned assault weapons years before the federal government did. Bill Clinton was able to get a ban on assault weapons in the big crime bill that was passed in 1999. But he put an eight-year, I think, moratorium on it, meaning it would only last for eight years, thinking by then they would be so well accepted, these assault weapon bans, that it would be automatically continued. George Bush was president; Republicans were in charge of the House and Senate and they wouldn't allow, once that assault weapon ban sunseted, with all the pressure the NRA put on them, to readopt it. So we had an assault weapon ban. That was one of the things that was brought up in the Senate was, "All we're asking for is let's go back to a law that we already lived with for a number of years, a law which, by the way, all the leading states have adopted. You can't have an assault weapon in California."

So the evil out there is really the vulnerability of the American people listening to these fear messages. And the NRA isn't saying, we're giving you these fear messages, but they certainly are writing and financing and marketing of it, with the result of selling it. It's a gun sale. It's all snake oil that people are buying, for all kinds of reasons.

Law enforcement cannot use a weapon until they've gone through training. And law enforcement—most of them can't take their weapons home. They have to lock them up in a gun-safe locker at work. If they do take them home, California law requires everybody who has a weapon in their house to keep it under lock

and key, so the kids can't get at it. If you let some accident happen, you're strictly liable because the law says you cannot have that thing unlocked. Law enforcement in California, if they draw a weapon now while they're out on duty and they get threatened and feel like they have to draw their weapon, everybody says that for the person who does that, even though they're extremely well trained, that is very traumatic. Because you realize something is going to happen to me, or something is going to happen to that other person, and it ain't going to be good. I think in most communities now, they require that if you draw the weapon you have to have mandatory counseling. I know for sure if you pull the trigger and fire, even though you might not hit anything, you and your family get mandatory counseling. That's just on pulling the trigger. So this is really serious and we're, as a state, very conscientious about what that can do to an individual who has gone through that kind of a thing. I'm sure it's really tense. You just can't go back to being, oh, that's nothing, the next day.

So if our best-trained people aren't allowed to carry weapons openly, and certainly have to be trained how to use them and when to use them, why should the general public just be able to walk around with them. And we can do something about it. It's politics. There's nothing in the constitution that prevents that. And even the Supreme Court—the big case while I was in Congress was in the District of Colombia, which had banned weapons—said you couldn't have hand gun weapons. And the court said that went too far and they threw that out, which was the first time that the court had ever interpreted the Second Amendment beyond the operating phrase of being a well-regulated militia. They said that cities couldn't ban them. But everybody who has read all court opinions

realizes that courts are going to allow you to set regulatory limits and protocols. If you banned assault weapons, I don't think they would question that. For other kind of weapons, I think you would have to be very careful, but I think you could still do it because California certainly has done it. And we haven't eliminated killings in California, but I think we've eliminated the historic proliferation of all kinds of weapons. So I just think Congress is chicken and California's state legislature is macho. (chuckles)

Reti: (laughs) That's your summary on the subject. What was it like to be part of the sit-in? I know part of it you had to miss because you went to be honored by the Colombian Embassy.

Farr: The sit in started as a protest to the Republican leadership that we wanted gun legislation to be brought to the floor for a vote. No [bill on] restrictions on guns has reached the floor, despite all the school killings since the Republicans took over. That's irresponsible and that's why we staged a sit in.

I went to the Colombian Embassy in the morning, so I didn't get down for the opening when John Lewis wouldn't leave the floor. I got there soon after. It was—I think we were all feeling like demonstrators feel. I don't think we've made a difference. I think we embarrassed the Republicans. I think we're going to do it again when we get back [after the summer recess]. We're going to do something. We're going to continue it. But I don't think it matters much unless we can win the elections. I think we were surprised at the overwhelming support we got, when it became a hot item.

Reti: Yes. And it was an amazing use of social media. Congressmembers were turning their cell phone cameras on the protest.

Farr: Yeah, it was Eric Swalwell who ended up using social media to broadcast from his iPhone. And then C-SPAN picked up the signal. The Republicans have since tried to get C-SPAN not to broadcast it. Because the way C-SPAN works is that we, the House and Senate, deliver the signal to the cable company, C-SPAN, who transmits it all over the world. And the Republicans said, “Well, you’re not allowed to transmit the message because the House is shut down and we’re not sending you the signal.” Well, we were getting the signal from inside the House. It just wasn’t through C-SPAN. It was from people on the floor. So that debate is going to ripen, I think.

The Farr Family

Reti: All right. Well, on a totally different topic—you told me about how you and your wife met years ago. But I wanted, just for the record, to document a little bit about what she does for her career, and about your daughter as well.

Farr: Well, Shary and I met—I saw a picture of her on my father’s bulletin board. She was my cousin’s roommate and best friend, and had actually lived with my cousin—I didn’t know that—at the time. My cousin, Boo [Janet Niven Swords], was younger by about five years, but her brother, Nick, was very close to my age. So everybody in my family knew Shary before I did. And they all liked her, and thought she was cute and I should meet her. She knew everybody and just fit in beautifully. So I met her in San Francisco, at a party for my cousin Nick,

who was graduating from UCSF Medical School and his wife Becky, who was graduating from Mills College.

Shary walked in wearing a beautiful red dress and I was smitten. Our first date was in Washington, D.C. at the National Zoo. I was teaching Peace Corps volunteers going to Colombia; she was passing through as a tourist. That was in 1967.

We got married and it was almost a political wedding. We had our wedding rehearsals in August of 1968 and the wedding was on a Friday night in August, the week of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.

Reti: Oh, my God! (laughs)

Farr: And some of my ushers were at that convention. They drove right from Chicago to a big party at the Saint Francis Hotel in San Francisco.

Reti: Wow. That was quite a historic convention.

Farr: Oh, yeah. Quite a historic convention. So we got married on a Friday night and it was at an Episcopal Church in Beverly Hills. And we had our party in the Bel Air County Club. It was pretty fancy. All I know is her father, who was paying for it, was very angry and only would pay for so much. Not until after I was married did I know that he made my wife pay for most of it. Which made *me* very angry. And he cut off the bar at a certain time when everybody was just getting ready to have a lot more drinks. And my uncle, my cousin's father, stepped in and told the bartender, "Don't worry. Keep it open. I'll pay for the drinks." We'd left early because we were going to Colombia for our honeymoon,

so we had to catch an early plane. So we left the party, but it went all night and they moved over to my cousin's house. And I think out of that night two marriages came to be. But we missed all that.

We were married for ten years before we had our first and only child, Jessica. We lived in Santa Clara when we were first married. I went to Santa Clara law school. And then we left Santa Clara and went to Sacramento. And we were there for about five years, bought our first house in Sacramento.

Shary got involved in Sacramento—a little bit in Santa Clara—she was working with some friends of my parents because they'd lived in Los Gatos and they knew a lot of people—and she worked in a preschool or kindergarten with young kids. But when we moved to Sacramento, she got very involved with Planned Parenthood, being a counselor for pregnant teenagers. Then she got a job in the district office with the congressman from Sacramento, a fellow named Moss, John Moss. He was chairman of the banking committee in Congress then. Doris Matsui, now congresswoman, was the wife of Bob Matsui, who was a city councilman before running for Congress. He took John Moss's place when he died. Bob Matsui ran and took the seat.

So anyway, Shary was working for Congress long before I even thought about it. I hadn't even run for public office. I hadn't done anything. I was a staff member in the Legislature. I wanted to return to Monterey County to get a job; the first chance was in the general election of 1974, when a wonderful Hispanic challenged the Republican incumbent, Bert Talcott. I came to Carmel with Shary and worked on the Camacho election that I told you about earlier. So I took a

leave of absence from my job in the capitol and we moved down here. I got appointed to the board of supervisors after that failed election. We bought a house for \$150,000 and we are still living in it.

We had our only child, Jessica, in 1978. Jessica went to a private kindergarten, All Saints School in Carmel Valley, and fell in love with her classmates and the teachers, and ended up going all the way through eighth grade there. And then she went to Santa Catalina because she had friends there. And then she ended up working. She fell in love with horses and managing horses and teaching kids how to be equestrian riders. She ran and managed the Pebble Beach Equestrian Center, and then moved to Carmel Valley and ended up buying her own little equestrian farm. She's struggling to hang onto it right now, financially. And she's had two kids and she's divorced. She's a great mom and loves teaching.

Reti: So you have grandkids.

Farr: I have grandkids, Ella who is fourteen and Zach who is nine. Pretty cool.

Reti: And did Shary have more professional jobs?

Farr: After Planned Parenthood and John Moss; after moving here she got involved with Hospice. Her mother had died of alcoholism at age thirty-eight. Shary always said she never knew her mother in any sober sense. Her mother was a chronic alcoholic, so much so that the family had to move out of the house and leave her with a caregiver. Her mother constantly was drunk. She fell in the bathroom one night and hit her head and that's what killed her.

But somewhere in there Shary started getting interested in death and dying. And I remember (laughs) I always kid her about this. When we were first married, I came home and she had all these books about death and dying. I said, "What's going on? Is our marriage over? What's going on?" She said, "No, I'm just really interested in the dying process and what comes next. I never got to know my own mother. But I got closer to my grandmother. I was there when she died. I just want to know more about death and dying."

And she read this stuff and then she got a job at Hospice. And she had essentially sensitivity training towards how to approach people on the issue of illness, terminal illness that's going to end up with end-of-life. Hospice really liked the way she dealt with patients and gave her more and more responsibility. She went to work for a bank after that. And then she came back to the Hospice modality and started a business of counseling people by word of mouth. There are no degrees required because she doesn't do any financial planning. But what she does is she gets people thinking about aging—what happens to you as you age, how it affects you and those who love you. And eventually death. These are things that we don't talk about in our society. And she has a counseling service where she sits down with people, or their children, because oftentimes the children say, "You know, my parents are pretty frail and elderly and they haven't told anything to me. I want to know what their life plan is going to be like."

Reti: (sighs) Yeah.

Farr: So she has a notebook she's created, the All Together Notebook.^{lvii} She has some phenomenal ideas that she's thought up. An example that I think is so clever is one where, when it comes time that you should no longer be driving a car, who do you want to tell you that? Fill in the blank.

Reti: Ah. So you have a pact ahead of time.

Farr: Yeah, because normally nobody ever gets to that question until it's too late. And then you're not going to trust the bearer of the message. But here you've already predetermined who that person should be. All the things that are not in wills and trusts—she goes through all kinds of details and tries to get people thinking about writing their own obituary, planning their own memorial service, or whatever service they want to have. Writing letters to their loved ones, or their children about things they would love to have happen; letters to their spouse, or the kids, if they're parents and they might die in an accident. Also, to have all the information about the keys to your cars and houses anything else you own and whether you have insurance on them, and if so, where they are, who is the insurance owner. And the bank accounts, investments. You organize it all in this notebook.

And what she's told me—and she's written me a beautiful letter saying, “If anything ever happens to me and I become incapacitated, I want you to let go. I'll be all right. You go live a life and make life with our daughter happy.” That's really beautiful, to have permission to not have to sit here and think: I took a vow, for better or for worse, and have to sit here and watch this painful fading away. She said, “No. I don't want you to do that.”

So she doesn't make a lot of money, but she's got a lot of friends and she's really good at it, helping a lot of elderly people figure out how to live, and how not to live in fear. People get old and they get really unable to—and they're lonely. She started this when her grandmother was dying of throat cancer and lived in Southern California, and had a group of very active women with her. When her grandmother became more incapacitated and couldn't participate socially, the women would still come over there to see her. And sometimes Shary would be there and the women would come up to her afterwards and say, "Do you really know how to write a check? Do you know how to pay bills? Do you know the difference between stocks and bonds?"

Reti: Oh. Those skills that a lot of women of that age never learned.

Farr: They said, "We're terrified. Our husbands died and they never explained anything to us. We've got these lawyers and we've got these accountants and we don't even know what their jobs are. Do you want to come talk to us?" She gets all that stuff out ahead of time, so that you don't have to live in fear. She tells stories of one gal who wouldn't—her husband died and her friends wanted her to go on a tour with them, a sailing trip. And she said, "Well, I can't go because who would be here to pay the water bill?" So she's liberated a lot of women with the idea that you can go have a life and things can get taken care of. She's good at it.

Reti: How have you created balance in your life together?

Farr: I think we've both been totally independent since the day we met and we've never given up on that. We've never been dependent on each other. So

whether I'm home or not (laughs)—it's never been a big issue. She kind of enjoys not having to worry about me coming home late, or bringing friends home for dinner, or just being there. I think we both have learned to enjoy solitude.

Reti: How have you taken care of yourself?

Farr: I haven't taken very good care of myself.

Reti: You haven't taken good care?

Farr: No. I'm overweight and out of shape and not feeling good. Aging.

Reti: Being a congressman is very hard on your body?

Farr: I don't know how much is Congress and how much is aging. I think aging has more to do with it.

Reti: It's a challenge.

Key Staff

We haven't really talked about your staff. We have talked about some of your colleagues in Congress that you worked with.

Farr: Yeah, I'm really lucky. As you know, working in an office, people come and go. Congress, because there's no tenure, or no certainty—you're hired at the political will of the politician, the people with the office. And they can let you go without cause. So what you attract is young people who just want to get started, have a lot of energy and want to work hard. It's very hard, also, to keep people. You're given a lump sum budget to run your office, and you're given the

authority to hire up to seventeen people. You can't hire any more than that. You can have a couple of interns. So your salaries aren't as competitive as they would be in the private sector. So you see a lot of people on the Hill; I mean thousands, I'm guessing, three or four thousand people work in the Capitol buildings and the office buildings around it. And yet, other than for senior members, salaries aren't good. So there's a huge turnover.

But I've been very lucky. I mean, I came in midyear, like the kid who comes into school in the middle of the year and nobody pays any attention to him.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: I hadn't gone through orientation. I didn't know anything. I couldn't walk from one building to another without somebody helping me find the way. When I was a county supervisor in this building [where this interview was being conducted]—I had a tiny, tiny office up on the first floor, a tiny office about a third of the size of this one, and one half-time secretary, an elderly gal. In the state legislature, I had a two offices. I had an office here in Monterey and an office in Santa Cruz.

And then in Congress, I ended up with three offices. But staffing was difficult because when I came in I didn't know a lot about Washington. Leon Panetta had already been sworn into office and had staff and was operational, they left a skeletal crew to keep the office and answer the phones and stuff. So I inherited that but I didn't ever get a chance to interview them or anything. And they were all looking for other jobs.

I remember trying to search for a chief of staff. And I have to tell you—after being in Sacramento and having so much talent in Sacramento, I was so discouraged because all that kept coming in and interviewing were old men. And they were smoking cigarettes and talking political—I just didn't like them. I didn't like their style. I didn't like their choices, the way that they smoked cigarettes, or anything like that. I was really getting discouraged, thinking, God, is this what you have to hire in this town?

And then this tall, thin blond gal walks in. And by the way, before that, the Panetta staff—because the walls were all blank because he'd taken all his photographs and things off. So I was just saying, "Does Congress have a way of borrowing art from the National Gallery or something? Because this office is just—I've got to have art in my office. I'd love to have art from our district. I mean, what do we do about art?" People were just slow at getting back to me. I kept asking, "Did you find any answers on the art stuff?" I think they thought I was crazy.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So this gal comes in for an interview. I probably had forgotten that I'd made the appointment but the staff said, "Your next interview is here." "Okay, send her in." And this tall, blond gal walks in, Rochelle, and introduces herself. And she looks around and she says, "Congressman, you need some art in this office." And I told her later, I said, "You know what? I hired you that moment." I said, "That's the kind of person I want. Somebody who is observant." She interviewed

beautifully and had all kinds of wonderful friends. So I hired her. I thought, God, I'll be lucky to keep her. She'll be gone in a year. She's still with me.

Reti: Twenty-three years later?

Farr: Mm, hmm. She's worked in the Senate. She worked on the House floor. She's really well-known in Washington, very, very competent.

Reti: And she's your chief of staff.

Farr: She's the chief of staff and she's been that since day one. She's been so good. The office staff loves her. And the fact is that I probably have the most senior staff in Congress now because nobody has left.

Reti: Nobody has left.

Farr: No, my first, second, third, and fourth employees have been with me—I think, the youngest has been like fifteen or sixteen years.

Reti: That's astounding.

Farr: It is. So Rochelle hired Tom, who was from North [Monterey] County, who went to school in North County and went to school in North County and lived in Pacific Grove. And Troy, who came out of a congressman from Missouri's office—I think the congressman and I were on the Ag Committee—and Troy does my ag policy work. And Debbie Merrill, who has been Rochelle's assistant. She's really good at our military stuff. So we have a lot of specialists in our office. And then Tom Tucker, who has been my scheduler. I mean, I really have a wonderful staff.

Reti: What about the folks here in this district office?

Farr: Yes, Karina, in the Salinas office—she went to Soledad High School and then was in the first in her class to go to UC Santa Cruz. Bertha, I think dropped out of high school, but then she went to Heald College and got secretarial skills. And she's just cracker jack on all the immigration stuff. She does as professional work as any lawyer does, really very professional, following through. One of our biggest workloads is immigration issues—visas, things like that. My staff member, Kristen [Peterson], in Santa Cruz is now running for the Capitola City Council. That's really cool.^{lviii} The best thing is that people are wanting these people to come work for them because they've got such great reputations.

Reti: Because now that you're leaving office, everybody has to find a new job.

Farr: You know what's good about staff? You get people working with you long enough and you don't even have to—you just think things—I ought to be doing this. You call them up and say, "By the way, I think we ought to do this." "Oh, yeah. I thought you'd say that, so I already did it." (laughs) Wow. I just love that. I'd say, "Well, how did you know I was going to—" And they say, "Oh, we know you."

Reti: Because you've worked together for so long.

Farr: Yeah.

Final Reflections

Okay, well, I have a few last questions for you. If somebody was an incoming congressman—let's say, somebody who was running for your seat, or just somebody else—what kind of advice would you give them?

Farr: I think to really study— I mean, I think Jimmy Panetta is going to get elected.^{ix} Jimmy is a great guy, and comes from a great family, and certainly has been exposed to more than almost any kid in the world, as far as what his father [Leon Panetta] has been doing as Office of Management and Budget director, and then chief of staff to the president of the United States, and then head of the Central Intelligence Agency, and then being Secretary of Defense. I mean, there is just nobody in modern history in politics who has had as many important roles as his father.

But I think what Jimmy doesn't have is experience in elected office. I just know when you first get into office, you really are overly cautious because you don't know what it's like to vote on bills. And you think you have to weigh—you think every eye in the world is watching you at every moment, so you don't want to make a wrong decision. I just think it takes a while to get sea legs.

And my advice on that question you asked is just go by your own instincts. There are two things that are playing on you all the time. One is your heart and the other is your mind. When in doubt, follow your heart. But those are big decisions. And get around as much as you can. I mean, [Jimmy Panetta] has been showing up at a lot of things that have been happening for me and I think they're good because he gets a little education. Like, he was at the Center for

Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems meeting last night, talking to a bunch of people, Bob Scowcroft and others. So he's getting a sense of issues.

If there is anything I've heard from people most often it is, "Well, how come you know so much about—" I say, "Well, I've been doing this stuff for thirty years. I know a lot about water. I know a lot about traffic. I know a lot about this or that." (laughs) I forget that everybody else doesn't know the same amount but they haven't had to focus on it. You know a lot about these land use issues because you've kept up on it.

Reti: Well, that's partly my background in environmental planning, which I studied at UC Santa Cruz.

Farr: I think the advice is: It's hard work. Do it. And like it. If you don't like it, get out. Pay attention to these communities and what they're saying. And they're all so different. And then push the envelope where you see where you might be able to do something. It was partly my initiative to create a national park. It wasn't like it was all organized and somebody came and dumped it in my lap. Or to create the monument at Fort Ord, or extend the [Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary] boundaries, or do hundreds of things. You get a sense of self and you say: I can do this because I have the power to do it. It's my job. I don't have to do it. And probably I won't get any credit for it. But it's really rewarding to be able to do something on your own.

Reti: What kinds of ideas do you have for your own future? What kinds of dreams and hopes do you have?

Farr: Hmm. Well, basically, my body has been starting to melt. I just have a lot of health [issues]. Seventy-five was a landmark year. Age-wise for me, it's always been a landmark. And my grandchildren are growing up so fast. I want to spend some time with them. It was several factors. I mean, I have to leave Congress sometime. When would be a good time to do it? It's never a good time and it's always a good time. So you just have to make the decision and it's hard because you give up the power of being able to do good, both individually with casework, and if you don't like things you can introduce a bill to fix it. New startups every day. You can just do it. And you've got a bunch of staff who can help do it for you. It will be hard to give all that up.

But I'm tired. And I think in politics you need a fire in the belly. And I want to see my grandchildren. And I really do want to—I grew up in this community but I haven't enjoyed it because I've had to run off to work all the time. It would be nice to have an afternoon like today and just go home and take a nap.

Reti: Yeah. And enjoy all those parks that you've worked hard to establish.

Farr: Yeah. And I'm not—I'm a busy person. I have so many projects to do that I won't have enough time to do them. I'm not worried about anything.

Reti: All right, Sam. Well, unless you have something else, I'm going to bring this to a close.

Farr: This has been fun.

Reti: Thank you so much. It's been fabulous to do this with you.

Farr: Thank you. I'm so excited that the legacy of this oral history is there. What a privilege. It never would have happened without having this office. But then, having the leadership of UCSC saying, let's capture some of that. Hopefully someday my grandchildren or great-grandchildren will be interested in it.

Reti: Oh, I'm sure they will be.

Final Interview, After Retirement

Reti: Today is March 23, 2017. This is Irene Reti and I am back with Congressman Sam Farr, who is now retired from Congress. It's been, what, six months since we talked? The last interview we did was on September 1, 2016.

Farr: Really? That long ago.

Reti: Yes, it was right before you went back to Congress. And it feels like a different universe [since the election].

Farr: Yeah, those last hectic months.

Reti: Yeah. So, we're doing one final interview to wrap up some of the threads that we didn't get to last summer, and also to talk about the months after we did our last interview, and a few things about the future.

Farr: Boy, three months in service after our last interview and three months now out. I'm learning how to retire. I'm taking lessons. (laughs)

Veterans—Department of Defense Health Clinic, Fort Ord

Reti: (laughs) Okay, so let's talk about some of the issues related to veterans that we didn't cover last time, as well as a couple of new developments. First of all, we didn't talk about the health clinic that you put through, the Department of Defense outpatient clinic.

Farr: Well, it was really interesting. I think the military had a real wake-up call when they did [BRAC] the Base Realignment and Closure Act because that act is essentially one that is enacted by Congress every so often. Annually, the president and the Department of Defense come to Congress saying, "We need another BRAC round. We need to close more military bases because we have more real estate than our mission requires us to have and it's not cost effective to hang onto unnecessary real estate and unnecessary military training programs. So, we want to modernize, downsize, and relocate." And that's what the process is all about. Congress must authorize a BRAC process, which brings back a list of closures and realignments.

So, after the military makes their recommendations to the president, he sends the list to Congress. And they've already authorized into the law in a previous session of Congress that this can be done. They've created a commission, which reviews the recommendations and goes around the country to affected communities and then they hold public hearings. I've noticed the commission usually accepts everything, very rarely change much. Then it's an up or down vote in Congress, to accept or reject their recommendations.

And that's how Fort Ord got closed. Even though we made all these arguments that it wasn't cost effective to do so, nonetheless, the Department of the Army didn't want to keep Fort Ord.

But what happened, and this gets into all of this healthcare for active duty soldiers and veterans, is that when the army was at full swing at Fort Ord during the Vietnam War, the Department of Defense decided to build [several] hospitals around the United States to bring the war wounded back from Vietnam and have them recover on American soil. And they built these gigantic hospitals, 400 patient-bed, licensed hospitals in different places in the United States. And as I understand it, they used the same plans for every hospital.

So, they built one at Fort Ord. And that's federal land, so they don't have to go through any zoning; they don't have to go through any local permitting or regulatory agencies because they are exempt from all that. Unfortunately, what they did was they built this hospital without any California earthquake standards.

When they had that hospital there, with a full complement of medical staff—doctors and nurses and physical therapists and so on—every person related to the military—active duty, of course; spouses of active duty, children of active duty, veterans, retirees—everybody went there. They were allowed to go there because there was always space available. These hospitals were for active duty soldiers primarily, and then for spouses and children secondarily, and then for the retirement community if there was space available. And this was so big—And guess what? They never billed anybody.

So, the hospital closes. And the military was thinking, such a modern hospital, everybody is going to want to buy it. And everybody was interested—the Sutters and the Kaisers and all those big groups that own hospitals were all interested in looking at it. But when they found that it had no earthquake standards, their liability wouldn't allow them to even go near there. So, the army kept it and today it's just a big federal office building.

But when they closed Salis B. Hayes Hospital, here's what hit the Peninsula is—okay, you have all these officers being assigned with families to the Naval Postgraduate School and to entry-level soldiers coming to the Defense Language Institute. Where are they going to go get their health care? The DLI in Monterey had a small clinic for uniformed personnel. But that didn't take care of their spouses or their children. Because at DLI they were young, a lot of them weren't married. But the Naval Postgraduate School was officers who were in their late twenties and thirties, and they had families. And the army said, "Well, you can all go on TriCare," which is sort of a national Medicare for military personnel. It's an insurance policy called Tricare. But the TriCare reimbursement to doctors is lower than that for Medicare, so the doctors on the Monterey Peninsula, who had never heard of Tricare before that said, "We're not even signing up for that. We have no interest. The payments are too low."

And all of a sudden, there was no ability to get healthcare. And the company that had the TriCare contract literally had to fly in doctors to live in Monterey, particularly for pediatrics, because young officers have a lot of young kids. A family practice firm finally signed up in Salinas. But moms would wake up in the morning at Fort Ord housing and say, "Gee, my kid's got a cold today. Normally

I'd take them to the doctor but I don't want to drive thirty minutes over to Salinas. So why don't you just stay home from school and see if you get better." So, what we argued is you're not really servicing the military personnel as promised.

So, this led to this health crisis for both active duty military and veterans. So, we were able to secure an old medical clinic at Fort Ord for veterans' health care. It was right in the middle of the Cal State University campus. The campus wanted it for their own clinic. But the Veterans Department, because they are a part of the defense community, was able to put in a request that the title go to them before it be given away free to the university. So, they got the title. And the idea is, if you ever move out, then you'll just turn it over to the university.

So, one question is, how do we do healthcare for all, not just categorical health care: civilians here, uniform military there, spouses and children somewhere else. Fortunately, there were some really clever people here, namely General Bill Gourley, who was a retired army general, who really took in the whole community of healthcare. He was very involved with civilian healthcare with Community Hospital, and very involved in this community. And he came up with the idea of: let's build a joint building for both active duty military, and retirees, and veterans—for everybody who is qualified to get medical veteran health care services.

It took years. First we had to have the army make a finding; they were very reluctant to do it because they were admitting failure, that they were underserving their military personnel by not having adequate immediate care.

And they've come in, reluctantly, to be a part of this. But nonetheless, we said, "Well, the veterans are going to build a clinic and we want you to be a part of it."

And today we've got that clinic and (sighs)— Irene, I don't know how many different iterations we've had. It took years. Because where are you going to build it? Seaside wanted it, but the land that was in Seaside had been given through the BRAC process to a private developer. The law didn't allow that ownership to develop it and therefore they couldn't get it back into federal ownership. And it had to be a private building because the way we got it funded was to go out to the private sector and jump ahead of everybody in the VA line of clinics and so on. It would have never been built if we'd had to go through the VA capital outlay process. But the law allowed, where there was a keen interest, to go to the private sector and say, "You build it and we'll lease it back from you after you've spent your millions of dollars building it." So, that's the process we used. So, the legality of where you could build a building like that on real estate that was affordable—

It ended up in Marina because they were ready to go. They had what you call a shovel-ready lot. And they said, "We'll do it." And so, the building was developed. It went through a lot of design changes. The veterans were in charge of it. The army has been enthusiastic, and then reluctant, and then tried to pull out, and now is in it. We haven't had what we call a hard opening. We had a soft opening when the building was completed. You could go in and see it all, all of the electronics and everything. None of the furniture was in. That is going on now, right now. Actually, next month, I hope, is when they are supposed to open

the doors and allow the public in and start working. They have to train all the personnel.

It's interesting because this is the first clinic that's ever been designed in the United States sort of bottoms up with both the Department of Defense and the Veterans Department, two totally different departments. But if you think about it, nobody in the Veterans Department can get there without going through the Department of Defense because that's how you become an alumni of the military: you become a veteran.

And you'd think these people would all work together. But they're two different silos, two different bureaucracies, and two different languages. And what we're trying to do in Congress is to break down those walls between the two and make them one. I mean, I would really hope that our defense budget—when we describe it we'd add the veterans budget. Because but for the defense budget, we wouldn't *have* veterans. And yet, we separate them so it doesn't look like we're spending so much money on war. Because when you add the Veterans Department and the Department of Defense together—and I'd also put in the Homeland Security Department if I were trying to budget this stuff. Because they put all the welfare programs under one category—Health and Human Services—that's Medicare and that's everything there is for social benefits. And they say well, that's a bigger expense than the Defense Department. But that's because they walled off Veterans and Homeland Security. Anyway, that's a debate that I think is going to be taking place in the future in Congress, a lot of ideas about really having the full value of what the cost of war preparedness is, and not just limit it to the able-bodied military personnel in the Department of Defense.

So here we are, doing this clinic, which hopefully will be a model for the whole country because it's going to be a lot of cost savings. The biggest problem is (and this is going to be very interesting to see if it really works) is that Congress has been arguing with the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs—mostly the Department of Defense—and says look, “We want to have one billing system, one electronic file, one system that fits all.” And unfortunately, the departments have gone out—and these are billions and billions of dollars in health care costs—and they've contracted with different software providers to provide all these electronics to essentially do this. And they all say it's too expensive and too late to change and we've just got to maintain what we have. Meanwhile, Congress has been ordering, “No, you don't. Just get these things to work, no matter how you have to do it.” So far nobody has been figuring out how to make it work, until this joint clinic.

They're going to be doing the first trial model in the United States at the William Gourley veterans clinics. So, if you walk in there as a person in uniform, a man or woman in uniform, or you walk in there an old man veteran, or you walk in there as a child of an active duty military person, or a spouse—you don't have to go to different halls to sign different papers and things like that. All the billing is going to be done behind the scenes. That will be the first time it's ever been integrated. It's a big deal with a lot of new programming and training required. I hope when it's in place, we can convert the nation from here.

Reti: Oh, that's fabulous!

Farr: Yeah, it is fabulous. So, this clinic is really kind of a whole new—and this is the way I wanted it—because if there is anything that comes out in all these interviews it's that I've always been interested in collaboration. Remember when we were talking about all the local governments, and how many of them there were, and how they don't talk to each other and all of that stuff?

Reti: Yes.

Farr: Fire departments didn't used to talk to each other, or police departments. Fire and police departments couldn't talk to each other, until after 9-11 when we finally got these integrated communication systems, and codes, and all the jargon that they use. Imagine if every airport had a different procedure on how to talk to the tower and land.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: You know, it's just—well, that's the way it—

Reti: It was kind of like that.

Farr: It *was* like that. I think when people complain that there's too much government—there is. There's too many governments and there's too many faces of too many governments. Everywhere they turn, people are not getting the answer that they want. If we can just collaborate more, essentially have one stop—I don't care whether it's state, local, or federal, you could go to this government building and they'd behind the scenes send the messages to whatever part of government needs to solve them. That's always been one of my goals.

But anyway, I'm really proud of how we did this clinic and how we're going to operate it. Because it's not just building a veteran's clinic. It's really building a new modality of how health care services should be delivered.

Reti: Fantastic. Thank you.

Farr: Well, it was really spoken about when we did the whole ceremony what we called the soft opening, with everybody there. I don't know whether the next one will be as big. We had the secretary of veteran's affairs here as a speaker. The new secretary under President Trump, I don't even know.

Reti: This soft opening was before the election, in October [2016].

Farr: Yes, a lot of people who were invested in the politics of the Obama administration—I mean this takes a big movement. This was a big, expensive building, about 150 million dollars of private money. All of those personalities have got to get really invested. So, it was sort of, we want to get this done before the change in the White House and pushback to the old way of silo managed medicine and people forget how important it is to do it in a new way.

California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery

Reti: I see.

Now, I know we didn't have a chance in previous interviews to talk about the cemetery that you helped get established at Fort Ord, the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery.

Farr: Well, when Fort Ord closed, the biggest shock was how much land was out there. Fort Ord is 28,000 acres. That's about the size of the entire city and county of San Francisco. So, it's big. We knew we wanted to protect the dunes from coastal development and big hotels and everything along there. And they were full of lead and the developers just didn't want to pay for all that. They wanted access to all of this real estate. But frankly, from a smart investment point of view—let's build where all the infrastructure already is there, the roads and sewers. Unfortunately, none of it was up to code. So, they had to do them all over again. But nonetheless, it's probably easier to repair something than to build all new.

Anyway, we essentially took what we called the cantonment area, which was the City of Fort Ord, sprawled out as it was and said, "That's where development will occur." On the edges of that was a lot of new housing and everything. But all the areas that were questionable, either as former toxic sites, or had unexploded ordnances, or lead in them, like the dunes—we said, "Well, those are not very high priority. What's the real estate value of selling that stuff?" Because the military has to clean up the land before they transfer it. But it wasn't a high priority to them to clean it up. They're getting out of there. Why would they want to spend all this money on clean up? So, it was kind of easy to make sure that we created what I think is really wise land use planning, in putting most of Fort Ord into open space, but allowing for intensive development, where development had already occurred.

And cemeteries need open space. There were sort of these buffer zones between the developed area and the undeveloped areas. We sent the veterans out and

they looked at all of them and they chose one. It's kind of a valley-shaped spot. We went to the Department of Veterans Affairs and said, "Here's what we want. It's federal land with the Department of Defense. We can get it transferred to the Department of Veterans Affairs and you can build a national cemetery on it."

Well, we had no idea how stubborn and bureaucratic the Department of Veterans Affairs was going to be. Essentially, their policy is, "If we have an existing cemetery, a veteran's cemetery, within seventy miles as the crow flies, we will not build any new cemeteries within that circumference." Well, there happens to be a veteran's cemetery [the San Joaquin National Cemetery] created in the 1960s when they built the San Luis Reservoir, over by Santa Nella. The Bureau of Reclamation cut out a lot of land there and that land was given to the Veterans Department because Tony Coelho the congressman got an earmark to build a veteran's cemetery there. Unlike San Francisco and LA and these other places where there had historically been cemeteries, which have been cities that have infrastructure and hotels and have some history of some military presence, Gustine and that area has none, no history of anything. It is in just the middle of nowhere. But it was there and they invested in it and built a cemetery.

And people in Monterey and the Monterey Peninsula said, "I don't want my loved one to be buried there. It's too far away. And what's there to visit? There are no hotels. There is nothing else to do." So, we went to the department and said, "Look, there's no town in California that has more military history than Monterey. This is ideal. This is where military history began on the Western front. You definitely want to have a cemetery here."

“No, no, no. Not a bit. We’re not going to build anything in Monterey County or around here because we have the Gustine Cemetery.” (Or what I call the Gustine-Santa Nella cemetery). The veterans here were furious. And what the Department of Veterans Affairs did was say, “Well, the lawmakers in Congress provided a Plan B. If we don’t build it, the states can build it.”

So, we go to the state and I think Bruce McPherson was the state senator at that time, in the late nineties and early 2000s. The state had said, historically, under whatever governor, “We’re not going to do cemeteries. The federal government does that.” But they had made one exception because they had made one exception once because they needed a vote once from a state senator, a Republican from Weed, from Northern California, up there right on the Oregon border. And this guy held out that he wouldn’t give them a vote for the budget, and they needed Republican votes unless he got a cemetery.

So, in a weak moment they said, “Okay, you got a cemetery.” And guess what he did after retirement from the senate? He became secretary of veterans affairs for the department, probably under Pete Wilson. The state had no idea what they got into because they never really appropriated much money. Yet it was on the books. And you can file an application for reimbursement from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. What you do is you spend the money and then you just send in a receipt to the federal government and they pay you back. And so, it’s a no-cost cemetery. It’s maintained by the same standards that the federal government requires of federal cemeteries, the same kinds of standards, only it’s operated by the state. And the state has to mow the grass and take care of it, because the maintenance money is not given to the state. And that’s why

California said, "We don't want to get into this business because we don't want to pay for that." And we argued, "Look, you have more veterans living in this state and there are very few cemeteries and you ought to be in this business."

So, every legislator, through Bruce McPherson, Fred Keeley, John Laird, Bill Monning—everybody who has been in the assembly and in the senate has been working to get the state to turn around on this position. And we were dogged at it because we said, "You know, the feds won't do it but this will be a cost-free cemetery to the state if you guys can just get your act together and get the state to say they want it."

Well, what we ended up doing is creating a third way because we invented—we said, "Well, what if we created a local cemetery district and did all the work, and then just used the legal system of applying to the federal government through the state, so it's just a pass through?" So the state said, "Oh, we'd love that." They didn't do a damn thing. They came down to all of our meetings. They'd promised to help us. But they didn't tell us how to file. And the poor veterans around here—we needed millions of dollars and they were organizing golf games and bake sales and anything they could do to raise money for the cemetery. And finally, we collectively, politically, after about a decade, just got really ticked off and said, "This is ridiculous. This cemetery can be built. We have three iterations. We've got to break through one."

Well, the third one, which is to raise the money locally and to have the state pass it through—we finally got the state to agree that they would really do this. Only the state had to put up some money. And we were able to get that money

appropriated, thanks to the hard work of Bill Monning. And then the speaker of the assembly came in at the last minute and he found a million dollars of assembly money, contingency money. He liked the idea of the cemetery, so he put that in the pot. And we had to go through incredible regulations in the state, but we dedicated that cemetery last year. And I've been out there for—one of my staff members in Washington—his father was interned there last month.

And we've done phase one—they call them columbariums—it's where you can put your ashes. It's really beautifully designed. It's in a great location and it's well managed. It's only been open a couple of months and people are there daily, having internment ceremonies.

Now we're wondering—how do we do phase 2, the in-ground gravesites? And again, the federal government pays for everything. But they pay you back. So, you have to spend the money in the first instance. And so, what the state has to do is go through all of it all over again for phase 2. And Senator Bill Monning and Assemblyman Mark Stone are working on that. And I'm out of it, other than to bug them. (laughs)

Reti: Okay, I had no idea this had extended over so many years.

Farr: You'd think that if the federal government owned real estate, they could just pass it from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs and do something to benefit veterans and build a cemetery. But you've got all these internal regulations and all kinds of problems.

The problem with this—and people never realize how much—for every building, for everything around here that we just pass here every day, nobody realizes how complicated it is. It's sort of like Trump saying, "Health care is really complicated." *Everything* is complicated. That's why you need well-informed elected officials at every level to get complicated things done.

Reti: (laughs)

[phone rings]

Fort Hunter Liggett

Reti: So, we also didn't talk about Fort Hunter Liggett.

Farr: Yeah, Fort Hunter Liggett is a whole different struggle because that was BRAC. Essentially the BRAC criteria is this—military services can make a lot of decisions but when it reaches a certain threshold of how many people will be affected by a certain decision, that you are going to layoff or move, or the cost of the decision—that triggers the BRAC process. The move can't go through unless it goes through the BRAC process.

Now, Fort Hunter Liggett was a 25-million-dollar operation to test small field artillery and weapons before we bought them (fly it before you buy it) where the defense contractors paid DOD to test with soldiers battlefield exercises. The cost was all given back to the military because it was done by the defense contractors. And what the military would ask for is to design equipment that soldiers could carry in battle to shoot down helicopters, blow up tanks—essentially military field weaponry. And when they would build it, they'd have to use it; they'd have

to practice with it to see if it was what was called for. So, they used Fort Hunter Liggett as a weapons experimental command. And they would bring in the soldiers to actually do the enactments in the field, and do realistic warfare using these weapons to see if they work.

What happened is the BRAC Commission didn't put Fort Ord on the list because they were just going to decide that they were going to consolidate all their weapons training into one weapons proving grounds. They have all these different weapons training grounds or weapons proving grounds. They didn't need a whole bunch of them. Just put them all in one place. Consolidate them. So, Fort Hunter Liggett was sort of under the cost threshold and they didn't have to really tell anybody or go through this public process.

However, the BRAC Commission when they got this list, went back to the military and said, "You haven't put enough things on here." So, the army was running around and saying, "Well, what can we put on there? Let's throw everything on our B list up there. Let's move it up to the A list and give it to them."

So, they put Fort Hunter Liggett on the list and it went through the BRAC process. And what they decided was, "Okay, you're going to keep all that land because you're still going to do training. You're just not going to use the weapons down there. And you have all those buildings at Fort Hunter Liggett, and we don't need those buildings because you're essentially training soldiers to do warfare. And you don't stay in hotels and classrooms when you're in the

middle of a war. So, get rid of the community," "the community," which they call the compound or the cantonment area, where they contain all the buildings.

(laughs) Which is just a weird— Because it's 168,000 acres. It's huge. It's bigger than Camp Pendleton, which is a big Marine Corps training base in Southern California. And everybody was really confused.

So, what I did, is I thought, okay, this is an opportunity (chuckles)—because the military hadn't really paid a lot of attention to Fort Hunter Liggett—maybe we could get the National Park Service to take it over. I just love that place. It's just spectacular.

So, I called Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt, who was a friend, and said, "Bruce you, as a secretary and as a member of the federal family, can put in requests that land be transferred to you at no cost. Put in that you want to make a national park out of Fort Hunter Liggett."

So, he calls me back and he says, "My staff tells me it's only the buildings." I said, "Yeah, it's only the buildings, but you're going to need buildings for a national park. You're going to need hotels. You're going to need places. You can use those buildings and eventually we'll get the open space."

And he said, "Well, how sure are you of that?" I said, "Well, I'm not sure but you know, I don't think the military has high priority for this base."

So, he goes and puts it in, which shocked the army. But they didn't know what they were going to do with it. And then I tried to [put forth] this really crazy idea. "Look, the people that are training there are National Guardsman. These

are people who are active in daily life. You know, they're teachers and they're carpenters and everything else. Lawyers. And they put on the uniform on the weekends. In the summer, when their kids are out of school, they got to go off to Guard training. And where do they go? They go to Fort Hunter Liggett. Wouldn't it be neat to have a place there where all the families could go? And when they get off duty, they could hang out with their families. So, you essentially follow Dad to his summer military duty. It would improve the morale if families could be together. What better place than there?"

Reti: (laughs) An army Chautauqua, or something like that.

Farr: Yeah! And I called Mary Wright, who is the head of the state parks department and I said, "You're running Hearst Castle. Why don't you come down and look at the Hearst Hacienda?" She knew of it and she said, "Oh, my god. This would be perfect. We can't offer to the visitors at Hearst Castle an overnight stay. But if we could recommend that on the same ranch, at the northern end, at Fort Hunter Liggett, there are rooms there where Hearst had all his ranch hands stay, and convert those. We'll get a concessionaire operator to do all this and they'll invest their private money in the upgrades and operation."

So, she went out to the contractors who work Hearst Castle, and Asilomar, these people that specialize in managing state and national parks. These are big corporations and really smart on how to do visitor accommodations and everything. And what they said was, "We can do it but we want a nine-year contract." And Mary came back to me and said, "Can you get the law changed at

the federal level?" Federal law did not allow the government to go into a nine-year lease. The maximum is five years.

Reti: Nine years. That's a strange number.

Farr: That's what they needed to get their money back. They were going to invest millions in upgrading everything, bringing it up to code, making it accessible. They figured they needed at least nine years of revenue to pay back the investment. The federal government would never make an exception for one little idea out in California, to their five-year rule. So, that all fell apart.

In the meanwhile, the war [in Iraq] starts, and the military is thinking about—how do we—we are now what we call the military of one. That means that the reservists, who are not active duty; people that are in the reserves who have professional jobs as well; and National Guardsmen, will be called up into active duty. But we've got to train them because when you're going off to warfare, you've got to be as good as the regular army person or navy person who is spending full time training for this mission. And you just come in as a weekend warrior. But when we put you in harm's way, we want you to have the skill sets equal to—because you're fighting alongside— So this was the idea. Let's have a training base for them.

Well, then they all got together and decided, "Let's make Fort Hunter Liggett our army reserve training headquarters for the West Coast." And since then they've been investing tons of money into Fort Hunter Liggett. We've been saying, "Wait a minute. Keep it in the cantonment area." And we've gotten some design standards and everything, trying to keep it in the mission motif of the San

Antonio Mission, and keep it away from the mission. And in the last few years, they have developed the airport down there, a landing strip that can handle the biggest airplane that you can fly. They have developed tons of housing and this new indoor response center that you're talking about. It's a huge building.

And nobody knows about it. I mean, it's in the middle of nowhere. You come out of nowhere and all of a sudden you run into this whole new city out there. It's just unbelievable. And to their credit, the army reserves are making this the first zero waste base in the United States. So, all of the electricity is going to be generated by solar and biodegradable waste. And their water—all of that will be recycled. The goal will be to become the first zero waste military base in the county, maybe in the world. And that's really cool.

So, what we've done is that they've now done army lodging, which is a civilian-administered unit within the Department of the Army, that manages hotels and motels for military personnel all over the world. And they're running the Hearst Hacienda. But it's open to civilians, to the public as well. And actually, we've had a staff retreat down there. And I think Fred Keeley had a staff retreat there. And I've talked to a lot of people, particularly people who love wildflowers. And they are booking the place right now. They think with these rains [in the heavy rain year of 2016] it will be just gorgeous.

To the army's credit, they've put in a museum about the history of Hearst at Hunter Liggett. It's one of the most historical spots in California because the San Antonio Mission, which is right next door, was the most prosperous of all the twenty-three missions. It was huge lands. They were running like 6000 cattle and

10,000 sheep. They essentially supported the mission system more than any other mission. I think they had about 1000 workers at one time—neophytes—Indians who had been baptized through the Church, who were living in the greater area. They lived in these small, little collectives, Indian villages, and all supported, and all worked on the Mission San Antonio Ranch. And the first civil marriage in California, Catholic marriage, was at that church. The Coulter Pine tree, the Douglas Fir, were all named by botanists who came and visited the mission. And then Hearst built his cattle ranching operations there. Supposedly it's about a day's ride by horse—it would be a hard ride—from Hearst Castle over there.

So (laughs) first I wanted this whole thing to become a park. When we lost that, it was, okay if you're going to design it, make it look like the mission. Don't make it a whole, new city because you're really using it as a training base. People go there for like a week, like you go to Girl Scout Camp. You go there for a special skill set. For example, I was down there when a bunch of nurses, doctors, and lawyers, who were all in military garb and wore a uniform—they were all being assigned to Iraq, and even though they weren't all going to be in harm's way, in case the building they were working in was invaded and they had to do an escape, they had to know how to carry a pistol and use it, and they had to know the procedures that you use and these protocols. So, before they deploy them, they send them there for a week-long training course on how to do this. And it varies. The British come over and use it because they love parachuting in and out of there.

So, I describe Fort Hunter Liggett as sort of the military's convention center for anybody who wants to come and use it for any kind of purpose because they've

got all the infrastructure for that. You design how you want to be trained there and then use their facilities. They've got hotels and feeding stations and they've made some fake villages that are like driving through the Afghan countryside, these villages. They've wired them all with sound, so they can have the sounds of chickens and goats and everything and you feel like you're in an Afghan village with people all speaking that language, using the Defense Language Institute's [people]. It's pretty cool.

And what we've been trying to do with Fort Hunter Liggett is say, "You've got facilities here and you're now employing specialists. You've got a medical clinic here. This medical clinic was closed for years because there were only eleven people [at Fort Hunter Liggett]. Now there's a whole bunch of people there. But there's not enough to maintain a full practice of what you need to run a clinic. So, when they do have lots of people there, then they'll bring in a doctor for that week or something like that. So, we've suggested, again, part of the collaboration. "Hey, there are a lot of civilians that live down in this area. It's a long way to Mee Memorial Hospital in King City. Why don't we open up that clinic and allow the civilians to come in and use it for prenatal exams and annual exams, things like that? Better utilization. Because it's there and it's equipped for that purpose. It's just not fully utilized."

So again, I think there are a lot of things we can do in the town-gown relations between military installations and the communities. It's a lot easier when you have a big city around you like Monterey, but much more difficult when you're in a rural area and it's miles of driving. But it's still a lot closer to the facilities—I mean, they have a movie theater there. They have a gym. They have a swimming

pool. They have a bowling alley, a gas station, a little store. They have all those things on base. People shouldn't have to drive all the way to King City in order to get things that they could get there.

Reti: Right. And as we've seen this year during the fires and now the mudslides that closed Highway 1, Big Sur can become extremely isolated, and having any kind of services available is really important.

Farr: Well, ironically, the only way you can get to Big Sur now, the southern end of Big Sur—

Reti: —is Nacimiento-Fergusson Road.

Farr: —is to go over through that base and then up over that Forest Service road and back down to the coast. I think it's the most beautiful drive in America. I've done it already about six times this year and I just love it. I can't wait to go in a week or two to see the wildflowers.

Reti: Oh, it's going to be a great year. Okay, well that's very interesting. I had no idea about any of that.

Salad Bar in Every School and School Lunch Program

So, let's backtrack now to the Salad Bar in Every School and the School Lunch and Breakfast programs.

Farr: Yes, well when I got on the Ag Committee in Congress, I'd never been on the Agriculture Committee in Sacramento. Government and agriculture—I'd never totally understood it. What is the role? And essentially, what I learned

quickly and got very excited about is that the Department of Agriculture was created during the Civil War by Abraham Lincoln because the idea was to move West and to start occupying these lands. And people who were living in rural areas, and who were eventually drawn out to rural areas, even the [Civil War] fighters, had no idea how to live in a rural area. They were urban folks. They didn't know how to build a latrine. They didn't know how to kill an animal properly, or dress it, or cook it, or prepare it, or how to develop water systems.

So, he created essentially what I call a big Home Ec department for the United States and called it the Department of Agriculture. And in that is still a very strong department on rural development that still has, since the 1860s, the responsibility for rural water, rural electricity, rural communication. What's rural communication today? Wi-Fi. So, the whole—how do you build the grid in America in the rural areas is in the Department of Agriculture, not in the Department of Energy or Commerce, or any of those others. And rural housing for farmworkers. Not in HUD, but in the Department of Agriculture.

So, I got really excited to see how the Department of Agriculture could apply itself to the Central Coast because most of what you hear about USDA is about commodity crops and all the attention given to them with research money, university buildings, etc. I learned quickly is that all of the discussions and debates in Congress have been about commodity crops. We have commodity crops in California, but they're not major. We grow some cotton in California, and that's a commodity crop, but it's the only commodity crop that you don't eat. Because the rest of them all are edibles—beans, wheat, rice, corn, soybeans—things like that. All of those crops can be stored in silos. So, what happened in

the Midwest dust bowl, where all of this stuff was being developed and grown, was a concern that if we lost farmers, if the markets dropped out, we would have a food shortage crisis. Commodity crops can be stored in silos. So, when the farmers went to the banks to get loans to plant their crops again, the bankers said, "We just talked to Joe who runs your silo and he says he's not buying your wheat this year." This was the 1930s.

So, the government came up with this idea of, well, what about food security? We can't just let these farmers not farm and then all of a sudden, we have no food and we tell them, "You've got to go back to growing," and the farm has fallen apart. We have to have an ability to sustain our farmers financially. So, we'll set up this guarantee that if the market price drops below a level that we establish, we'll make up the difference. If the market level is higher, you don't get paid anything. You make it on the price. These are now what they call farm subsidies. Government buys all the excess and distributes it through feeding programs like schools.

So anyway, in Monterey County and Santa Cruz County on the Central Coast of California, we don't rely heavily on the subsidy programs and most of these farmers resent it because what these farmers also want to say is, "Oh, we want to start what you're growing." And we actually have protection law here saying, "If you grow on your lands what we're growing here, you cannot, at the same time, have another land that you're growing a commodity crop on. Because you're not really bearing any risk. You're going to compete with us at the same time that your other hand is getting subsidized by the federal government. So,

we have a law, a federal law, that says you can't sell specialty crops unless you're not receiving any commodity payments. And that protects our agriculture.

The other thing that protects our agriculture is the microclimate here. You just can't grow artichokes in Kansas. We have this incredible microclimate. So, this is a long background into my development of my understanding of agriculture because I [came to understand], okay, we're going to grow a lot more crops than we can consume. And we're starting to grow those crops in really interesting ways, like organic. I've been very involved in creating the organics legislation in Sacramento. And UCSC has a lot of history of that because of the Farm and Garden program and environmental studies there, and everything.

So, it was—well, where do we develop these markets? And it struck me that the government is buying all the food for schools. What a huge market!

And if we can start getting the schools to eat healthy foods—who grows healthy foods? California. Who grows healthy foods? Who grows the healthiest food? The Central Coast of California. This is a multi-billion-dollar expenditure. So, our strawberry growers have been always involved with the Strawberry Commission, how do we do market sales so that we can sell strawberries to Mongolia—

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: —for what they call marketing orders. And the government supports them. I bet that the school lunch program is a lot bigger than the Mongolians trying to learn how to eat strawberries. And obviously, we sell strawberries to New

Zealand and Australia and Chile and all the others that are in the Southern Hemisphere that have reverse climate. And we import—I mean, my wife and I were laughing the other day about how much fresh fruit is in the stores right now and nobody knows that none of that stuff is grown in the United States during the winter. We're not harvesting and never have harvested bananas here.

Reti: Blueberries and strawberries—

Farr: Yeah, and we want them year-round every single day and we want everything to be fresh. The hemispheres are trading.

So, the idea is that there's this untapped market out there of healthy food in schools. But it's really hard to get people in Washington who aren't focused on this stuff to care about that. So, what I—because I love local government—and this was taught to me by a really great nutritionist in Salinas who talked to me and she took me to schools. I said, "Well, how come you can do all this, this fresh salad bar and everything?" She said, "We just do it. My principals and superintendents—they love what we're doing. They just give us the go ahead. All this food is subsidized. It's all federally done. So, there's really no cost."

We're a big food-producing area that uses the same things—fast food packaging and all the trucking routes. Everything comes all pre-made. So, they're doing this huge business, this huge contract. And the military has one of the biggest markets with the military bases and they contract with all of these carriers. And so, it's essentially really a food industrial complex that is very hard to break, and to try to get your local organic farmer to say, "Hey, I want my kids to eat what's coming out of my field in Santa Cruz at their school lunch program."

Guess where the lynchpin is? School boards. They control the school district and although they've never been asked, never been told, because the superintendent probably knows very little about the feeding program because they don't have to pay for it. There's no politics.

Reti: Because that's all federal.

Farr: Yeah, it's all reimbursed. So, it doesn't affect teacher's salaries, it doesn't affect buses, doesn't affect books. None of that. So, nobody is paying attention to it. And I said, "Yeah, but what if the school board, three votes out of five, said, 'We want organic, fresh local food and here's the budget. If you've got budgetary problems, let's talk about it.'"

And this has just taken off because the organic growers realized, "Oh, I've got a steady market if I can sell to the schools. Kids eat a lot of stuff." Now it's a huge national battle and I led it when we reauthorized the Child Nutrition Act. Congressman George Miller was chair of the Labor and Education Committee. For agriculture, politics is really strange because the law that is being written on child nutrition is written in the Education Committee. But the law is not administered by the Department of Education. It's administered by the Department of Agriculture. So, the people that really are into the whole food thing are left out (which is the Department of Agriculture), of the school nutrition program. (laughs)

Reti: (sighs) More silos.

Farr: It's not going to change. I was talking to my lifelong friend, George Miller, and I said, "God, George. You've just got to get these kids to start eating better. You're all worried about obesity and everything." He said, "You write it. You know something about it. You write it." I said, "Well, thank you."

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: So, I got together with the staff and we required in the bill that we have a salad bar in every school in America. And that we start doing nutrition—whatever the model diet that schools do, that they educate students about the nutrition in the food they eat. Now they have a plate chart, which is interesting, because they have a plate in different colors, matching food, and you put the green plate with the green food, etc. And you're supposed to have a percentage of each and it's a lot easier for people to understand the nutritional value of what they are putting on their plate.

I've seen a revolution occur. I think this is one of the areas where, if Trump really wanted to talk about American jobs—schools are not allowed to serve imported food in their feeding programs. They do sometimes. Obviously, bananas are important. But kids got sick eating Guatemalan strawberries. We traced it back. It hit the strawberry growers here when they had recalls because all these kids got really sick. But [the contaminated] strawberries were grown in Guatemala and they were unlawfully sold in the school districts. But there's this huge market out there to try to do fresh. And what I tell my grower friends—I say, "You know, everybody in America is interested in dieting these days. It's a huge fad, multimillions of dollars. The South Beach Diet, or the Stillman Diet, or this diet,

or the Paleo Diet or whatever it is. If you look at those diets, everything in them is California-grown." So, if you eat California agriculture, you're going to be healthy. California doesn't grow that much corn and wheat and potatoes and things like that. Huge battles. I lost a battle in the Agriculture Appropriations Committee, where they wanted to put potatoes back on the list for children to eat. I said, "My God, potatoes—you eat them in the morning as hash browns, potatoes for breakfast; French fries for lunch; baked potato for dinner. You eat potatoes three times a day. It's what's causing all this obesity in America." I know the Potato Association—I'm probably their number one enemy. I've been fighting them on getting potatoes out of schools. They've even gone after me on oceans. It's amazing. They figured that my ocean legislation was going to affect Idaho potato growers because you would regulate the coastlines and you regulate the rivers, and the Columbia River headwaters are in Idaho and you would use that waterway to eventually tell them whether they could plant potatoes or not. But that's politics. They want everybody to eat nothing but potatoes all day long.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: Anyway, so what is needed is for local school boards to own the school feeding programs, to design them to be one stop for administrators and match local growers with the school. This is a whole new politics and learning. And I think in the end, if we win, it's going to be because school boards make these decisions. And that's local politics. You know, the farming community doesn't go lobby. They hire lobbyists to do all the big stuff. But I tell them, "Just go and

talk to your local school board moms and dads and just tell them what you got and how you could deliver it to their school.”

I saw that in the Salinas schools. When the director of school nutrition programs in the USDA came out to Salinas and visited East Alisal School, we sat down and had lunch with the kids. They did a skit for us with all these fresh vegetables and things. It was really cute. That school is all what I call 100 percent free and reduced, meaning the incomes from those families are so low that every child in those schools gets a subsidized meal. Too bad we can't just feed all kids. We essentially have to segregate children in schools every single day to show that each child who got a meal was entitled to that meal, and that that meal was indeed nutritious. It is the most bureaucratic paperwork thing. I hope they barcode it. You could barcode the kid and barcode the lunch and just run them through the scanner. There is a huge cost of just monitoring these stupid regulations. And unfortunately, Republicans won't change the regulations because they don't want taxpayer money being spent on a rich kid whose family should be paying for his lunch. But as the nutritionist will tell you, some of those rich families are dysfunctional and they don't give their kids breakfast. They don't give their kids lunch. He said, “You can see this kid come through the line starving and you just say, ‘Go get a meal. I'll pick up the tab.’” But that depends on the charity of the lunch room and some schools won't pick up the tab.

But anyway, it's a huge economy, and it's very important for the future of this country that we use our institutional feedings to improve human health. The military has gotten very smart about making sure soldiers who operate equipment are healthy. They are our “defense.” If there's a weapon to be

operated, it's got to be operated by a person. If they're sick or unhealthy, they're not going to be an effective soldier. So, we've got to make sure we grow them well. The DOD is very much against obesity and they have nutrition experts for the military and for the forest service and firefighters and all that. It's just that we haven't used that same nutritional standards to insure schools serve health foods and prohibit junk food.

Reti: Hmm. And does the military buy any local, organic produce?

Farr: They buy tons of it. I was very shocked when I got on the Ag Committee because one of the first persons to come in was a navy officer, who came in and said, "I want to talk to you about organic farming. The navy is very interested in nutritional food and we buy a lot out of the Salinas Valley."

Reti: Fantastic.

Farr: See, when the growers grow—I mean, normally what's happening now is it's all shifted to the big buyers, say MacDonald's or Taco Bell—they'll go directly to a grower to say, "I want to buy all the lettuce you grow." And unfortunately, when you have a breakout, like the E Coli breakout, they send their corporate risk officers out here and they say, "Oh, my god. I don't know if we can continue to buy lettuce from you because birds fly over your field. You've got to protect this. We want fences," and all kinds of things that have nothing to do with health science. [They believe stuff] that is unrelated to health science and natural science. [They think] if you build a fence over something you're going to keep E Coli out. Nonsense.

So, there is a lot of private sector risk bureaucracy going on now, essentially outside of what the government has established as standards for growth. And the industry has stepped up to it and regulated themselves very effectively because they know one recall hurts the whole industry. Spinach has never gone back to the consumption level it had prior to the spinach breakout.*

Once you damage the reputation of a crop, it has lasting economic impact.

So anyhow, I'm really excited about this. And what's happening now is that the grower's associations are subsidizing the costs of these salad bars because schools just don't have a lot of money. It's about \$1700 to put in a salad bar. The industry is sponsoring bike rides by their employees to raise money for salad bars.

And an interesting battle started once we got them in, because my colleague from the South (and they're what he called his lunch moms), the women who work in the lunch room would come to him and say, "Kids don't like all this stuff you want us to eat." And all the stuff they were serving had been traditional—lots of grits and lots of Southern food. "And they said, "It takes too long to do prepare healthy foods and salads and we don't want to do it." There was a pushback. So, he tried to eliminate the requirement that you have fresh fruits and vegetables in schools.

And then you get the canning industry coming in and saying, "Well, we canned all those peaches and strawberries and all those things that you want kids to eat. Why can't you let them eat all our stuff?" Well, those cans are full of sugar, you know. They said, "Well, that's fresh vegetables." No (laughs) it's not. So, every

industry has an economic interest in trying to not do what is the best thing. It's very difficult to fight all this. The best thing to do is go back to the politics of the community and school boards.

For example, look what Los Angeles Unified School District's school board did—a shocking thing, the biggest school district in the country. They eliminated Coca Cola in the soda machines. And the mom's groups and everybody got really upset: "Well, that pays for our band uniforms. That pays for all these incidentals that the kids love to do. And now we have no way— "Well, you're going to have to go out and raise that money some other way because you're not going to get that money out of the soda machines." And to the vending companies, "You can keep your machines there but you better sell stuff in there that's healthy." And if you've noticed, now you can get salads and fruits and vegetables out of vending machines.

Reti: Yeah.

Farr: That's come about because of all of this pressure that we're making, from the bottoms up. And Santa Cruz and Monterey, particularly Santa Cruz, has been sort of the lead, as they always are. They are the mouse that roars, but when they roar, the whole nation listens to them. They are matching up farmers with schools, and chefs with schools, to make meals in schools as good as private catered foods.

Reti: (laughs) I love it.

Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act

Okay, Sam. Let's switch over to the Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act. I have never been to the Clear Creek National Recreation Area.

Farr: It's in San Benito County. Most people have never been there. They don't even know that it exists. It's in the southeastern part of the county. It's Bureau of Land Management lands, which are lands that nobody claimed. During the Westward expansion, after they encouraged private sector development, you could go out and claim the land you want. You can have it. And the lands that nobody ever wanted for any reason. There's no mining issues. There just was no economic return on those lands. And they ended up being Bureau of Land Management lands. It's sort of like the Forest Service, only the Forest Service has got better land with timber and stuff like that. The BLM around here has land that they're doing oil drilling on and stuff like that, so people are discovering there is some value to BLM lands.

Well, anyway, the value of these lands in San Benito County—there's these park-like lands—is an old abandoned asbestos mountain. Asbestos is a naturally occurring compound. And the government was the biggest buyer of asbestos. So, San Benito County is pock-marked with these open pit mines and they've turned them over into off road vehicle driving, which is some of the most exciting in the United States. And what happened is that because it's asbestos and because of all of the lawsuits for asbestosis, the disease caused by inhaling friable asbestos, the EPA did some tests and decided that these open pits and motorcycles running all

over them could cause asbestosis, and they'd be sued, and because it's the federal government they'd be sued for lots of money and they'd probably lose.

So, their decision was just shut it all down. It's 60,000 acres. The Sierra Club uses it. People like to hike in it. And it was interesting because all of these different specialty needs were—there's a wonderful viewing spot there that I went to, on top of these rocks (I forget the name of the rock outcropping). We had lunch at the top. It was very easy to walk to. And it was a really clear day. To the north, we could see Mt. Diablo. To the east, you could see the Sierra Nevadas. To the west, you could see the Santa Lucias. And to the south, you could see the Tehachapi Range. I mean, essentially you're sitting right in the middle of California, seeing all edges. It's right there on the western side of the San Joaquin Valley. There's very interesting flora and fauna there. The Native Plant Society loves it.

So, battles went on. The Native Plant Society and the motorcyclists—you can imagine that they are not compatible. They sat down. What we argued was, "Look, I can't solve this problem if there are going to be local battles. Because I'm going to go and try to pass legislation to make the BLM figure out a way that people can use this land, assuming the risk, and knowing where the risky areas are by labeling them and everything. And you've already built wash racks, so after they come off, the tires of your cars and your off-road motor vehicles will all be washed before you leave the park. That's all in place. So, all we have to do is figure out a management scheme. But if you're going to fight with them because you don't like the motorcycles running over the native plants, don't complain. Work out a win/win.

They got down and worked it all out. Really opposites.

Reti: Good! That's hopeful.

Farr: I said, "Neither of you are going to win this battle unless you have the collaboration of the other." So, you've got the Sierra Club and the motorcyclists, off road vehicle people sitting down and saying, "Okay, we'll set aside this as a native plant area. We won't ride cycles in this area." Everybody came to a master plan and came to an agreement. It was beautiful. I don't think it's ever been done before in such conflicting areas of contrast—from wilderness protected zones to "beat the hell out of them" [areas]. And once that plan was decided I said, "This is a model. We've got to get this all over the country."

Reti: Was there one particular entity that facilitated that conversation?

Farr: The motorcyclists, because they love the out of doors. They love this particular park. We have a state park nearby in the Hollister Hills but it's not as exciting. It's just a round track. I don't know. I don't do off road vehicles. I would if I were a kid. (laughs) I'd go crazy about it.

Reti: (laughs)

Farr: But the Hollister Hills, I guess, is more of routine, not as dynamic as the Clear Creek area. So, I went back to the BLM and they were just sort of sitting there neutral, saying, "You know, we were shut down by the EPA. We'd kind of like to be back in the business of operating a park but our lawyers tell us we can't."

So, I found out that in the toxic waste legislation we have specifically labeled asbestos as a toxic substance. In order to allow the government to make exceptions to that, you have to have legislation. So, I put in a bill every couple of years, the last four or five years that I was in Congress. And we weren't in the majority, so I got Congressmen [Jeff] Denham and [David] Valadao, who are from the eastern areas there, and [Jim] Costa, who represented the San Joaquin Valley, to be my co-sponsors. We got the bill through Congress my last term but it died in the Senate because we just ran out of time. So, I'm sure Jimmy Panetta and others will pick it up. The argument here is, "Okay, BLM. Figure out with your smart lawyers and everybody else, how do you allow people to assume a risk. The National Park Service allows people to climb El Capitan. I can't think of anything more dangerous. If you make a mistake, you die. So, if you can allow them to go up these steep peaks, and sign some waiver paper that the government isn't assuming your risk, so why can't you figure out some way for people who want to ride motorcycles have a waiver? It's just kind of legal negotiation. Sit down and do it."

Nobody has been willing to. They stand back and say, "Well, the law doesn't even allow us to make that kind of a decision because the law strictly prohibits us from allowing us to have people have exposure to asbestos." But the law would say, "However in a situation like this, exceptions can be made." And they would figure out what they are.

Reti: Okay. So, it's still closed off?

Farr: It's still closed and it's tragic. Hopefully—I have to say BLM sort of came in and always opposed my bill, reluctantly. But for the Republicans, the fact that the Department of the Interior was opposed to it made it appealing to them (laughs) to want to pass it. But I think politics can work that out. Hopefully, Congressman Panetta will get it done.

Reti: You want to take a quick break?

Farr: Yeah.

Rohrabacher-Farr Amendment Medical Cannabis Amendment

Reti: All right. So, let's talk about medical marijuana.

Farr: Medical marijuana, wow. Yeah, this all got started with California passing the Medical Marijuana Act back in the 1990s.¹⁶¹ And as you recall, that was an initiative. The legislature couldn't get the votes to put it on the ballot so they did it by initiative signature gathering. And it was an interesting campaign because the people who sponsored the ballot measure essentially engaged in advertising to senior citizens. You know, "I'm a senior. I've got aches and pains. Why shouldn't I be able to use medical marijuana?" And the idea was that it was really going to be used for medical purposes only. And all that. And the public was very sympathetic and passed it. Law enforcement was very concerned because the federal government had strict liability, saying we're never going to allow any state to use medical marijuana because of federal law. It's a class 1 drug, which is the worst kind. It's up there with cocaine and heroin, and all that. And that's still the law today.

What's happened is there's this grassroots revolution going on in this country and saying, "Federal government, you shouldn't be so stubborn as to refuse to change the status of marijuana. People are convinced that it has beneficial purposes. And we're changing our laws to allow the administration and sale of medical marijuana in some states, including in California now. And other states have said you can use it for recreational purposes as well."

The big problem here is when you have the strict prohibition at the federal level, that law prevails, particularly in the business world. So, if you're in a profession, like say a federally licensed laboratory that's certifying the purity of things in drugs and everything like that, if you get sued for playing around with medical marijuana, you lose. So, banks are saying, "We're not going to go there because we're a federally chartered bank and it may be okay in California but it ain't going to be okay in Mississippi. We're going to get sued and we're going to lose." Banks control credit cards.

So, what's happened with these states is that the economy has all been developed outside of any kind of legal structure. People were coming to me and saying, "We have got to change the federal law and allow financial institutions to get in here." There is so much anti-drug feeling and certainly members of Congress had children and relatives who have been affected by drugs. And a lot of them believe that marijuana is a gateway drug and if you start using it you're all going to be heroin addicts, or meth addicts.

So, it's trying to overcome this social, anti-drug sentiment in America and it's been evolving region by region. But now you have this crazy conflict because the

financial world can't be in the market. It's hard to have financial instruments, savings and checking accounts, credit cards, normal ways of doing businesses. So, you're really doing an underground economy. And I've talked to kids here who said, "Sam Farr, I've got ten to twenty thousand dollars stuffed in drawers in my house. I used to deposit it in Wells Fargo Bank. And then Wells Fargo Bank came to me and said, 'You know, you've been a great client. There's nothing wrong with the way you've conducted yourself. But our lawyers tell us that we can't risk having your business in our bank anymore.'"

Reti: Oh. No kidding.

Farr: They have to pull it. This is happening to everybody. It's a cash business. It's hard to tax cash businesses. And in Congress—it started back in the nineties—essentially let's have a loosening of the national restrictions, these hard restrictions. And we've attacked it in every little way. For example, Congressman Earl Blumenauer from Portland, Oregon and I said when veterans come and get veteran counseling, maybe they ought to be using medical marijuana. Or, as we tried to argue to people who were against this, maybe the counseling will say—it's sort of like an alcoholic being told don't go use alcohol. The counseling could go the other way. This is the wrong stuff. But once the counselor or the doctor decides that this might be an appropriate use, allow them to counsel the veteran that they ought to be trying it in those states that have made it legal.

Oh! The Veterans Department goes nuts. And the DEA goes nuts. So, though we do those amendments to the veterans bill, [Dana] Rohrabacher, a congressman from Southern California, a pretty conservative libertarian, supports a getting

government off my back attitude. Get government out and let these things be a more libertarian lifestyle. If states that have already authorized have protocols in place and their law enforcement is dealing with approved medical marijuana laws, the Feds should back off. We shouldn't allow the DEA to go in and bust them. Because they're not breaking any state law. So we put the Rohrabacher/Farr amendment on the appropriations bill. It's the only procedural way you can do it, is to say, "No money can be spent to enforce that provision of law in states where it's legal. We're haven't been able to change the law but we're not giving you any money to enforce it." And that's what we've been doing and the process is repeated each year in the appropriations bill. But we had it as a vote. It was a controversial vote. People would come and say, "Don't make me vote on this. I don't want this to go down on the record because I want to go home and get re-elected. And this is very controversial in my district. And I don't want to have to face angry moms and my kids who are for it, or against it, or whatever."

We failed the first years, but asked for a recorded vote because every year we'd get a few more votes. And we'd go and lobby the no-vote people in their district. And then we'd send it out to the marijuana organizations and say, "Go lobby this member of Congress." And two sessions ago, we shockingly passed it. And to Rohrabacher's credit, he went and got all the libertarians, probably the Freedom Caucus people that are now [voting against Trumpcare] and say "Get government off my back." So, they voted for it.

And as these other states have been adopting laws the base has grown—there're 33 states that have approved medical marijuana, or even broader use of

marijuana. 33 states. That's 66 senators, because each of those states have two U.S. senators. So, it's going to be very hard for politicians whose states have gone through the political and legal process of writing the law— Now, the laws are all crazy in every state. They're all mixed up and there's no uniform standard. (That's how alcohol after Prohibition became legal, each state setting its own laws and restrictions.) Cigarette laws are state and local, as is alcohol. It's up to the states to decide how to sell it. I mean, Oregon, when I was a student there, you had to get a license from the state to go buy alcohol. They'd sell the license in the same place where they'd sell the alcohol. In other states, like when I was in Washington, D.C., the Costco in Virginia can't sell hard liquor. And the one in Maryland can sell anything. So, states have all kinds of what are called blue laws, or the old sin laws, that were made under religious pressures. The Bureau of Alcohol and Firearms Control in the Treasury Department is in charge of alcohol, guns, and cigarettes. And they administer all of these different state laws, which are very complicated when trying to have interstate commerce.

So anyway, what we're trying to do is get the federal government: one, to delist marijuana as a class one drug; and two, and I'm very proud of this—to have a medical study on the effectiveness of medical marijuana. This started when I was at a conference with a leading opponent of medical marijuana, Congressman Andy Harris. He's a doctor from Maryland and an anesthesiologist. He used to work for the National Science Foundation doing studies on drugs, as a researcher. And I said something about, "You know, we've got to loosen the laws on medical marijuana." And he just—he went the opposite. And afterwards I went to him and said, "You know, you and I have different opinions about this

but what we're lacking as legislators is that we have never had any official federal studies to know whether marijuana is beneficial or not. So, we're losing our grip because the federal government, particularly in the drug world—which you understand because you worked in it—the federal government is losing its credibility. You may be right. Maybe I'm right. But why don't we at least have a legitimate peer-reviewed scientific study, of which you know more about than I do?" And he looked at me and he said, "You know, you're right."

So, it took us about a year. About four congressmembers sat down and wrote the law. And it was supposed to be quickly adopted because Congressman Harris is a Republican and they are in control and everybody knows his reputation. Some people in the marijuana community don't even want this. They just think, "Well, that's going in reverse." But my point is, "Look, the debate is out there about whether this is a beneficial drug. The anecdotal evidence convinces me that it is. But that's anecdotal. Why don't we just have professional people look at it and study it and give us—is this good or bad or indifferent? What is it? And let the FDA get that study, and make that decision, and we'll build laws around that. And that will help get it descheduled and all of those other things that need to be done."

So hopefully Congress will adopt that. We didn't get it adopted last year. We were supposed to. But hopefully this year they'll get it—

Meanwhile, it's a gray area, very confusing, very risky financially because of legal complications and yet rampant street sales. I want to knock the criminality out of it, the underground, all the cartel movement of marijuana and all that

stuff. And some of them are what the Santa Cruz group call the Guerilla Growers, who are just sort of mowing down forests and doing a lot of bad management practices. They are going to be upset because I think they're going to be usurped by standards. Just like liquor is, or cigarettes, marijuana will be sold commercially and under commercial regulations. And taxed, fortunately. That will go to help pay for a lot of things. So, it's just a matter of getting the federal government to catch up with the state governments.

[phone rings]

I think there's just a lot of confusion right now. I think about half of Congress really understands that there's got to be some changes. And this is a tragedy, where the federal government still wants to bury their heads in the sand rather than dealing with a very serious and complicated issue, where you just allow this incredibly uncertain underground economy to flourish.

Reti: And there are water use issues.

Farr: Oh, all kinds of issues, financial, medical, environmental, social—you name it. We can't govern this nation properly without the federal government being a partner with the states. This is an issue where the feds have got to grow up.

Reti: Okay. So just a couple more things on my list here before we get into the more recent months in Congress.

Sam Farr Peace Corps Enhancement Act

Let's talk about the Peace Corps Enhancement Act, to improve the health, safety, and well-being of current and returned Peace Corps volunteers.

Farr: The Peace Corps is an interesting organization because it is separate; it's in its own silo. It's funded under the big category of the state department and international aid, but it's a silo within that and has its separate line item budget. I think the Peace Corps is the most cost-effective program of foreign aid in America. It is cheaper to send a Peace Corps volunteer overseas than any other employee of the federal government. It's ten times cheaper than sending military personnel and five times cheaper than sending US AID or state department. Why? Because they're all federal employees who have federal benefits. The Peace Corps doesn't have any of that.

Reti: They are volunteers.

Farr: You live. You volunteer. Well, you get a stipend but your salary in country is based on what an entry level or mid-level professional person would get. In Colombia, it was 75 dollars a month that I had. It was plenty of money. It was two dollars a month for rent. If you put it all in perspective, you can live off of it. So anyway, the costs of volunteering overseas are nothing. But the downside is they don't have the benefits that another federal employee would have overseas. They're out in the rural boonies. They're not living in the American compounds and in the embassy, where they have doctors and clinics and stuff like that. And what has happened over time is, particularly with domestic violence, is that women have been attacked, raped, and in a couple of cases murdered.

So, the reaction by the families was, "Peace Corps, you've got to take some responsibility. Why did you send my daughter to a place where she lost her life?" It's not frequent. My sister was killed visiting me. We went through all that.

Reti: Yeah.

Farr: And volunteers get killed in accidents, automobile accidents and so on. And people have post traumatic syndrome, just like the military does. When you live in a poverty-stricken rural area and you've really gone native, I mean, you've learned to live there, and you come back to all of this ignorance of America about what goes on in the world, and how people live, and what the culture of poverty is all about, and your friends and family don't pay much interest in what you did—you can have a lot of "re-entry crisis," as we called it. And some of these people really have psychological problems. This is rare, but it happens.

So, the idea was how do we capture all these things and really create a better training program for sending volunteers into harm's way? Although we also work with host country professionals and law enforcement and everything and we really don't send volunteers into towns and regions that are at risk.

So, when you come home what happens is a very complicated medical thing. When you leave the Peace Corps, you are severed from Peace Corps and they don't have anything to do with you. And you are transferred over to the Labor Department with an illness related to overseas service. And that insurance program was bureaucratic. I started running into volunteers with some serious

problems and I empathized with them. And I talked to others and they said, “Yeah, it is a problem.”

So, what we’ve tried to do in legislation is clean this all up. A Republican congressman named Ted Poe (R-TX) got really interested in it, namely criticizing the Peace Corps. And when he got into it he said, “Okay, I’m not against what the Peace Corps is trying to do. We need to improve its administration of these issues.” So, we introduced legislation to create all these new responsibilities and hopefully we’ll also get some more money to pay for it, so they won’t have to cut into the number of volunteers overseas.

I got the most money the Peace Corps has ever had in history. I’d like to double it, triple it. President Kennedy, who initiated the Peace Corps—his dream was to have 100,000 volunteers in the field every year. We never had more than about 15,000 at max the early years, and we’re down to about 7000 now. We have more money for the Peace Corps now but not enough to place the demand. The capacity is essentially you’re invited by host countries. So, first you have to have the invite. The asking host country wants to match certain skill sets. A lot of them want English teachers. But they also want people who can do rural economic development, learn how to create cooperatives for fishing or farming or whatever. In Africa, a lot of AIDS in rural health, and women’s health issues. So, they’ll go out and recruit Americans who want to do that and have some skill sets to be able to lend.

The demand to get in the Peace Corps is at an all-time high. About 23,000 people applied last year. And if we only have a maximum of 7000, and turnover is about

half of that, so 3500 a year. I mean, you have 23,000 people applying for 3500 jobs and the only thing that is stopping from filling those jobs is the amount of money Congress gives the Peace Corps. We've just been really reluctant to do it. There's no real reason why. It's, "Oh, the Peace Corps." Everybody is happy with the Peace Corps. But when you're spending so much money on the war, the Peace Corps gets flat lined.

And the interesting thing is right now you're beginning to have these seasoned military generals who really are in the theater, who have been involved in wars, coming over to the Peace Corps and saying, "How do you do it? We're supposed to go there and win the hearts and minds of those people. Because when we go out, we leave it to them. We get in very well. We know how to get in, sneak in, get in, bomb. We can invade any country in the world with the most clever opportunities. But we have no ability to exit with any— We haven't been able to exit Vietnam. Anything. We have not exited. We can't do it. We leave it a mess. But you Peace Corps seem to leave the country even better than you found it. How do you do it?"

"Well, we learn the language and we listen to the people, and we live with them, and become part of their community, and we build that trust." And the military is now teaching a lot of that. The Defense Language Institute in Monterey does. So, we need *more* Peace Corps, not less.

So, going back to the statement that Kennedy made—he wanted 100,000 volunteers. And the reason is that Kennedy, when he visited his father, who was an ambassador to Great Britain, he would socialize with all the embassy people.

And even though they were in that Boston Brahmin social world, he was appalled at how little the state department personnel [from different countries] knew of the country they were in. And he marries Jacqueline, who speaks all of these languages, and sees how popular she is.

So, he says, "You know, we need to radicalize the state department. We ought to send people out in the Peace Corps, send 100,000 of them. And they're going to come back and they're going to want jobs in the state department and U.S. AID, and some of them will go into military service. We'll sensitize Americans as to how to deal with host country cultures and problems." A brilliant idea. Well, he never got 100,000 volunteers.

But people speculated. Sergeant Shriver told me this before he passed away. He said, "What if Kennedy had been able to put 100,000 volunteers and we'd had that many since the Peace Corps began in 1961?" He said, "You know what countries they were in? Those first countries they went into were called Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq. Just think of what might have happened had you flooded those countries with young Americans, idealistic Americans who had gone native and learned all these things and had built confidence in people." Do you think we might not have to send our military in now?

I remember a profound moment that I had one night in Washington, riding back from Virginia in a cab. I always ask the cab drivers where they're from. This cab driver said, "I'm from Ghana." I said, "Did you know that Ghana was the first country which President Kennedy sent Peace Corps volunteers to?" He kind of slowed down and looked over and he says, "You know Peace Corps?" I said,

“Yeah, I was a Peace Corps volunteer.” He says, “Do you mind if I stop for a minute and ask you about Peace Corps?” I said, “No, not at all.” And he pulls me over and he says, “I’m here in America because Peace Corps. Peace Corps was the first white people in Africa that lived with the natives. We thought American whites were totally different than what we’d ever seen from European whites because they really cared about us, and they lived with us, and they danced with us, and ate with us, and sang with us. So, American people—this is why I came to America. Because of Peace Corps. My son, born here in the United States, is graduating from college. And he’s been accepted to medical school.” I said, “Oh, that’s terrific.” He said, “No, but I’m not going to let him go to medical school until he does Peace Corps.” I thought, oh, wow. That’s the kind of thing that we just need to hear more of.

So, I’ve been trying to build the Peace Corps and this bill is essentially trying to better handle volunteers’ experience—both during the experience so it’s safer and professionally linked up, so you don’t feel like you’re wasting your time. And also, if you ever have re-entry problems you can have a smooth system of getting assistance.

So, I don’t know where it’s all going because I think Trump is on the verge of just trying to dissolve the Peace Corps, turn it into something else. It would be the biggest tragedy in the world. And there aren’t enough congressmembers who want the Peace Corps. They’re indifferent. They don’t know a lot about it. Some argue, “Well, it’s not a voluntary program. They get paid.” Some argue volunteers are what churches do. “Let it be voluntary outside of government.” My Mormon missionary friends that I talk to—somebody is subsidizing them.

They're not living overseas without some payment. You've got to rent space and eat food and travel. Somebody pays for that, as does the Peace Corps.

Jim McDermott, a wonderful congressman who retired with me, from Seattle—he and I tried to get a study on creating a national service corps. And the problem is that if you create it, it would be bigger than the military. And look at the cost of the military. The cost is just— Where are we going to get all that money? So, our idea was to get some place like the Stennis Center, which has done a lot of studies for government on how to do operations; they could look at all the voluntary programs in America that exist, private and public. Or local stuff that's been going on. Where are all of these volunteer programs that already have administration in place? Could you create a national collective of voluntary organizations and say, "Okay, if you go into any of these they count as your service?" And maybe even incorporate (I don't know if you could do this with balance of church and state), but if you decided to do religious service—" I mean, we used to have, during the Vietnam War, people who were conscientious objectors, who could get out of being in the military. But they were doing something to serve. So, if you just incorporated everything that's out there and said, "Okay, go do any one of these things to get credit for National Service," it just might be cost effective. We should study the options.

Reti: Rather than create a whole new infrastructure.

Farr: You wouldn't have to create a new bureaucracy. We never got that bill passed. But hopefully one of these days—everybody talks about national service but nobody has been able to get the votes to really seriously study it.



Photo: Courtesy of Pete Souza.
Souza, Pete, "Sam Farr Speaking with Barack Obama on Air Force One" (2012). *Photographs. 2.*
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/samfarr_photos_all/2



Congressmember Sam Farr at the UC Santa Cruz Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.
Photo by Randy Tunnell

More about President Barack Obama

Reti: Okay, let's talk some more about President Obama. We talked mostly about all the other presidents that you worked with over the years.

Farr: Well, the friendliest president was Clinton, without a doubt. He was the kind of guy that you just— And he was so brilliant. You loved to hear him talk. What I loved about Clinton is you'd go with your best thought ideas and you'd talk to him a little bit about it, and he'd come up with a third idea that nobody had thought of that, was brilliant. Willie Brown was that way. Politicians are pretty egotistical in thinking how smart they are about stuff they really don't know about. So, I think what really surprises you is when you can share those thoughts with other intellectuals who really care and want to do something and they come up with another way, or an upgrade of your ideas. That's the way you get all excited about change. But you need presidents that you have that respect for. And they've got to be good listeners because you can't care about everything in the world, but presidents (laughs) got to pretend like every word that anybody comes to them with is important. Because really what they are trying to do is play a leadership role, a role of—I trust this person and I like them and I trust them to make tough decisions. And I'm really glad that they're working on problems that I think need to be resolved. So, you've got to have this openness and this very kind of social lifestyle. I think Clinton did very well.

I think Barack did more by the numbers. But Barack, when you were sitting in a group and talking about these ideas, was really good.

Reti: In what sense?

Farr: He was bright and he'd thought about these things. And he'd tell you, "Yeah, I agree with you. But here's my problem." He'd share on trying to have you involved in helping to solve his problem.

I think that one of the most enlightening and surprising things he did was announcing the reestablishment of diplomatic relationships with Cuba. I had been working on that for a long time and we were at some baby steps. He took one giant step for mankind (laughs) when he just sort of radically went way beyond and said, "We're going to reestablish diplomatic and trade relations. The Cubans are going to give us back Alan Gross. We're going to give them some of the Cuban Five that we've imprisoned. And we're going to move on and stop all these gotcha foreign arguments that weren't solving any problem."

Reti: What do you think motivated him to take that giant leap?

Farr: Because everybody would go to Cuba and come back, including Republican governors and legislators who went down there and say, "This policy is stupid. This boycott of Cuba is a political movement that's based in Miami and based in southern Florida, by Cuban exiles who are pissed off because the Castro regime came in and nationalized everything, took away all their businesses and all their homes and said, You can stay in your home and stay here but the home is owned by the government now. And by the way, all those extra rooms that you have in your house, we're going to put homeless people in them. And your business—the government is going to run it. You can still manage it if you want, but we collect the profits."

Most people just left and got angry, and wanted the federal government not only to overthrow the Castro regime, but wanted them to get all their land back and everything like that. I met Cubans who stayed, a guy who owned a chicken restaurant, very famous. And he just said, “You know, I’m the one that stayed. All my relatives left. At first I was very bitter because it was such a family-oriented restaurant. But they gave me full reign on how to run it. I’m on a limited salary but all my needs are taken care of—health care.” So, he was not—I don’t think he was happy, but he said, “I’m okay with it because I think the country has improved so much with the access to health care and education.”

And so, the policy that was generated was to just ignore Cuba and put it on the axis of evil list and do everything we can to condemn it. I think that just became a broken record that enough people didn’t believe anymore. And I think the people around Barack were telling him, “We’ve got to have a change in policy.”

Reti: So, he was responding to that.

Farr: Yeah.

Reti: Do you think he was too much of a compromiser?

Farr: It’s just me and I’ve never heard anybody else say this, but I think when he got elected president with such an overwhelming majority and such a national enthusiasm, everybody thought this was going to be a revolutionary period for America’s progressive thinking. [But I think that] there were enough people in security places and other law enforcement and others—someone sat down with him and said, “This country will be so divided under your leadership. There is

still all this racism out there that will never accept you as a black president. And you have got to go out there and reach out and calm this. There's sort of a silence out there, but it's bitter and it's hot and it can be really—I just have a feeling that somebody told him he had to be the great healer, when we were waiting for him to be the great launcher of all these fresh, progressive ideas that were ready to be adopted. Somebody said to him, "You've got to go very slow." Somewhere in there, because boy, he changed very quickly from that campaign rhetoric and that national unity: "We're going to solve these problems in very progressive ways," to backing down on it. And, of course, he was hit with this financial crisis, which just absorbed every minute of his time and every person in his cabinet to try to save this country's economy. Even how he did that was very controversial. But without money you can't do anything.

When we did the bailout bill, 25 percent of that almost trillion dollars that we borrowed went to middle-class tax cuts. I thought they were absolutely inessential to do. This trickle-down economics never works. But they thought, you know what? We've got to get the people who were reluctant to have the government borrow that money; give them back something. But no one ever knew we did such a big bailout. Why? Because your taxes change every year depending on your situation. And nobody knows that, "Oh, my taxes went down this year because the federal government is giving me a rebate. I never got one letter on it. And yet, we spent 250 billion dollars on tax relief. So, that's just kind of a waste that could have gone into infrastructure spending, and job creation, and stuff like that.

But what I think he should have done and what he could have done really well, from what I've learned in politics, is that you can't lead people with suggestions for new ideas until they understand what's broken and agree that it's broken. And two, agree with you that your solution is the best one.

And what he failed to do on healthcare is to go out there and just do a fireside chat on Healthcare 101. Nobody has ever done it since then either. I mean, I'm still yelling at the press every night when they talk about this repeal of Obamacare. You know, "Repeal and Replace." Okay, "replace." Let's focus. What does a replacement mean? You can't just say that fifteen million people are going to lose access. Nobody relates to that. You've got to explain how many different ways there are of buying healthcare and what's going to happen to the market when you place the "burden of responsibility," as they love to call it, back on the insurance companies. And they control it. Prices are going to go up and people are going to be cut off. People need to have the facts—everyone is talking in generalities over their heads. Obama could have started with a "fireside chat" on healthcare issues.

You know, the two biggest things that are in that healthcare that the press never talks about are the standardization of healthcare policies. Everybody has to sell a comprehensive policy. Because if you sell just a partial policy, or limited policy with caps on it, or exclusion for preexisting conditions—when you hit that mark and go over it, or have that condition, where do you end up? You end up back on the tax roll, through our Medicare system charity billing when you end up in the emergency room of a hospital without insurance.

Reti: It doesn't save any money.

Farr: Or getting so seriously ill that when you do end up there it's very expensive to try to treat you. So, this ounce of prevention, of having at least the professional level playing field, all insurance companies compete with the same rules. If you're going to sell insurance, all those insurance plans have to cover drug and alcohol coverage just like a broken arm. American medical politics stuck with the private insurance model, so we made the law fair for the buyer and on equal grounds for the seller. Let the market set the rates through competition. That's capitalism at its best. Some say, "Oh, get government off our backs," my god, government sets standards for the roads, the cars, the planes—everything else we do. The food we eat is all set by government standards. It's all managed privately. What's wrong with setting some minimum standard for health care delivery and saying, "If you're going to be in the for-profit business of delivering health care services, you have to at least meet some minimum standards of insurance." And secondly, what we required—in this business you can't make more than 15 percent profit because we're giving you kind of a monopoly. We require everyone to be insured. Public utilities commissions—in California, PG&E and garbage companies, all those that are monopolies—they are limited to 15 percent profit. And if they're making more than that, they have to rebate it back to their customers, which some of the insurance companies have had to do. I think those are two standard positions that ought to be in every— And the Republicans are going to abandon them, so I just see this health care system we have not getting better, but getting worse under the new president.

Reti: Well, I should say that we're, by accident of history, doing this interview on the day that the House is voting on whether to repeal and "replace" Obamacare with something else.

Farr: Well, if we could discuss the replace. I mean, I think the Democrats don't even mind—politics is the art of compromise. So, if you're going to repeal the name, "Obamacare" or ACA—and you want to call it something else, but you want to fix it, we'll give you the votes. We're not so appalled at politics wanting to have a different name. But we are appalled if you're going to replace it with something worse. And I don't think the media knows enough about it to explain the details of effects on people.

If Obama had given—and I think he could have done it so well, he's such a great professor at this, at explaining problems—if he could have had these fireside chats. But the political system, the press and everything—immediately they want answers. And I think he could have had a fireside chat with the American public. Let me explain to you how health care delivery works in America and do that basic 101, so that people would have an understanding. Because nobody knows how health care is delivered, except for their own policy. They know what they have and what they don't have. And it's either too expensive, or it doesn't cover all these things, or they don't have it at all, or they can't afford it. I mean, there are all kinds of issues. But nobody knows the difference between—okay, you're in a big group. Why does a group get to get insurance where they don't ask about preexisting conditions? If you're a public employee, or you work for a big company like IBM who has thousands of employees, the insurance companies don't ask you whether your employees are sick or not. It's just, "Okay, we get the

advantage of selling our insurance to lots of people, so we'll discount that insurance and we won't ask for your medical history and we'll give you all the standard policy." Oh, is that the way it works? People don't know that, or how veteran's medicine or military health care works.

Reti: So why don't you think Obama did those fireside chats, if he had the skill?

Farr: Because I think immediately the Washington news—the cycle and pressure is always: "Give us the answer. How are you going to do this?" Not, "What's broken that needs fixing and here are the options for fixing it. "Listen, I'm not going to answer any questions. I'm going to give you a professor's viewpoint on all the different types of the ways medical care is given or not given in America." This is what I would have loved for Obama to have done.

I would also have loved him to do that on the financial crisis we had. Why did it fall down? What caused all this? We had to go wait for a movie ["The Big Short"] to be made before anybody could understand it. And even that movie had these little vignettes trying to explain the concept of derivatives and how you'd be betting on all these sidebar bets. It would be like you are at a gambling table betting on whether the person across the table is going to have their eyes open or closed. I mean, that's almost the kind of craziness that went on. Unregulated trading. I think that could have been a really good fireside chat. There are other areas. But those are two of the biggest ones.

I think not doing that is what led eventually to Trump getting elected. Because people who voted for him were just so fed up. They didn't understand it: "How come things don't work? How come this is so complicated? How come I've lost

my job? I'm fed up with listening to speeches. I'm just going to go kick the can and maybe he won't win but we'll make it such a protest vote."

And then the purists sit home and say, "Well, Hillary Clinton isn't good enough, so I'm not going to vote. "I mean, I don't get mad at all the rednecks that voted for Trump. He got the same amount of votes as [Mitt] Romney. So, it's not that he won big. It's that Hillary's people just were such purists. "She's not good enough, so I'm not going to vote for her." The Democrats lost that election. The Republicans didn't win it. The Democrats lost it. We had so many Democrats who just sat at home or voted for a third party. Had the people who voted for Barack voted for her, she would have won big.

The Election of President Donald Trump

Reti: So, in the last interview we did, on September 1, 2016, I know we talked quite a bit about how worried you were about the election. And I was thinking about you a lot during the election.

Farr: (laughs) I never in my wildest dreams ever had a thought that Trump had a chance. I just thought, from the first debate with the Republicans, the way he was so condescending and so derogatory about his colleagues, professional people who want to run for president of the United States—calling them by names: fat and ugly and stupid. I said, "You can't do that. The American public will never accept that." And then all the groping stuff and all the other conflicts. I mean, this guy has no credentials, never done anything, never been in elected office. Nobody in their right mind would vote for him. So, I didn't think he had a

chance until Brexit in England.^{biii} Then I thought, oh, my god. There's something going on.

And what really struck me was when I went down to Colombia just the week before the Colombian peace accords vote. The accords were signed and I was there with Secretary Kerry. It was a phenomenal day, just being in Cartagena with all the presidents of Latin American countries, and the UN leadership. Oh, my god. Just gorgeous. All the Colombian people, everybody just as far as the eye could see, dressed in white. Men and women and presidents and everybody. Outdoors. A beautiful ceremony. And FARC getting up, and giving a way too long a speech, but essentially apologizing. And then the president apologizing back to the FARC for all the people who were killed in the revolution. Everybody thought, this is going to pass. And the next Sunday, about six days later, it didn't pass.

Bill Clinton once said, "Throughout history there are moments when things just sort of fall apart. It's political road rage. No one can actually put a causal connection on it. It's just you reach this tipping point of rage. And you're pissed off and you've just got to fight back. That's what's going on."

We've seen it going on in other countries. It went on in Austria with the almost-election of the fascists there. And it's gone on with voting in Colombia against the peace accord. And obviously, in other areas of the world. There's this kind of sentiment in countries all over the world. America has expressed theirs in such a big way because we're such an influential country. But we're not alone in it. So

maybe this period of history will go down as the political road rage period of history.

I hope that we can get back on track. But Trump can do a lot of damage. So, it will take a lot of new energy to get just back on track. You really haven't moved forward. You haven't improved the lot for people around the world. I think Trump is a real danger to America. I think he is setting us so far back that it will be hard to catch up. I think in the process we will lose our respect, once these countries realize we don't have to depend on America. We can buy from other countries. Brazil has always been independent. They buy from India and China and everybody and they're what, the sixth biggest economy in the world. And they don't pay much attention to the United States. And if more countries start doing that, our market share of the world economy, people will realize this is not such a great country after all. That really hurts us.

Reti: So, you spent a lifetime career in the Democratic Party. Do you have any thoughts about how the Democratic Party could be responding to Trump and how we get back on track?

Farr: Well, I suggested to Nancy Pelosi just before I left office, after the election— (We'd actually picked up seats. We actually won seats in the House, more than we had before the election.) We beat five or six Republicans. They lost; we won. It wasn't enough to give us a majority. I said, "You know what we ought to do? There's a rage out there and people don't think politicians listen to us. One thing I learned in the Peace Corps is that before you have an idea, first of all you got to make people think that it's their idea. Why don't you just take every

Congressional Democrat and have them go on a week-long listening tour? They wouldn't even have to travel. You could do it electronically." I did that by having a town hall meeting where Santa Cruz County dialed in one night and Monterey County another night. We call them electronic town hall meetings, where I listen to their questions. Direct access to your voting members of Congress from the privacy of your own home. Easy, informational, and building trust that someone in government cares about my problem or idea. I suggested to Nancy [Pelosi] that at the first of the year members do that: just listen. Our agenda would be built on that: the support of the people. In time, they would provide the grassroots support to get their ideas implemented.

I think American politics needs a "do over." Let's start by listening at the grassroots. Everyone in Washington is fond of quoting the late Speaker Tim O'Neil from Boston when he said, "All politics is local." I think you can see the success of local politics in California in moving forward on local issues and the failure the U.S. Congress had experienced even in trying to move forward.

Politics solves problems through the art of compromise. Conservative Republicans ought to join with Democrats to get things done. We saw it happen recently in our State Capitol when Republicans voted alongside Democrats on a controversial bill dealing with climate change. Compromise gets things done here in California. I hope Congressional Republicans will show the kind of leadership local politics has demonstrated.

Reti: Okay, thank you so much, Sam.

Editor and Interviewer, Irene Reti directs the Regional History Project at the UC Santa Cruz Library, where she has worked as an editor and oral historian since 1989. She holds a BA in environmental studies and a master's in history from UCSC and is also a writer and photographer.

Endnotes

¹ <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/03/local/la-me-a-alan-post-20110403>

² See <https://futureoftheocean.wordpress.com/2016/12/01/honoring-congressman-sam-farrs-ocean-legacy/> and <http://www.santacruzwaves.com/2016/06/sam-farr-honored-with-a-plaque-and-plaza-at-marine-sanctuary/>

³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/photo-finish/440130/>

⁴ Senator William Sharon was elected to the United States Senate in Nevada in 1875 and served until 1881. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Sharon and <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=S000292>

⁵ See Ann Lage, *Oral History Interview with Frederick S. Farr, California State Senator, 1955-1967* (Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley) for Senator Fred Farr's reflections on the California Scenic Highway Act [SB 1467] and much more. According to Lage, Senator Fred Farr is considered the first environmentalist in the California State Legislature. The oral history is available online in full text at the California State Archives <http://archives.cdn.sos.ca.gov/oral-history/pdf/farr.pdf> Also see the Farr Legacy Collection, which archives the extensive papers of both Sam Farr and his father, Fred Farr. The collection is currently being processed.

<http://digitalcommons.csUMB.edu/farrlegacy/>

Farr was appointed by Lyndon Johnson as highway beautification coordinator for the U.S. Department of Transportation in 1967.

⁶ The murder was committed on August 6, 1948 by Augustine Cawaling Lavinia. Files related to this murder are available in Fred Farr's (in process) archive at the California State University Monterey Bay library. <http://digitalcommons.csUMB.edu/farrlegacy/> See also <http://heraldphotos.blogspot.com/2010/12/gallatins-restaurant-1948.html>

⁷ See <http://www.inyoregister.com/content/derham-giuliani-0> and http://esaudubon.org/heindel/hndl_93.htm for a bit more on Enid Larson's work in the Owens Valley.

⁸ Supervisor Dave Potter was first elected to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors in 1996 and represented the fifth district, which includes Big Sur, Carmel, Carmel Valley, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Pebble Beach and Salinas. Most of the interviews with Congressman Farr were conducted in the conference room of Supervisor Potter's office, with the kind and generous permission of Potter and his staff. Potter was defeated in the June 2016 election by Mary Adams.

⁹ Most of these interviews (except for the first one) were conducted during the height of the Soberanes Fire in Big Sur, which ended up being the most expensive wildfire in United States History. It was the result of an illegal campfire in Garrapata State Park and burned over 132,000 acres. It was not fully contained until October 12, 2016. See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soberanes_Fire

¹⁰ See <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-coastal-road-trip-steve-lopez-steve-lopez-at-the-mexican-1471998071-htmllstory.html>

¹¹ See <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/whoweare.html>

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Corona

¹³ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Ocean Odysseys: Jack O'Neill, Dan Haifley, and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2012) Available in full text at <https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/ocean-odysseys-jack-o%E2%80%99neill-dan-haifley-and-the-monterey-bay-national-marine-sanctuary>

¹⁴ See <http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/article/NE/20160316/NEWS/160319734>

¹⁵ Margaret Wentworth Owings was a nationally known artist, writer, and environmental activist, who led campaigns to save the world's oceans and forests. She founded Friends of the Sea Otter, among many other accomplishments. "Margaret W. Owings: 85, Defender of Wild Creatures," *New York Times*, January 31, 1999. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/31/us/margaret-w-owings-85-defender-of-wild-creatures.html>. Owings' archive is at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library and a finding aid to the collection is available at:

<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt3n39q1kd/admin/> Her oral history, conducted by UC Berkeley's Regional Oral History Office is available at https://archive.org/stream/wildlifeartistenviron00owinrich/wildlifeartistenviron00owinrich_djvu.txt

^{vii} See, for example, the PBS show *Big Blue Live* <http://www.pbs.org/big-blue-live/about/monterey-bay/>

^{viii} See <https://www.californiataxdata.com/pdf/Prop13.pdf>

^{ix} California suffered through a major drought in 1976 and 1977 that at that time was considered the worst drought in the state's modern history.

^x <http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/River-in-Ruin,674963.aspx>

^{xi} The papers from Sam Farr's time as California legislator are collected in the California State Archives. A finding aid is available through the Online Archive of California at <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt3m3nd8cf/admin/>

^{xii} See <http://www.sorensensresort.com/>

^{xiii} Ten people were killed at Love Creek near Ben Lomond, California on January 4, 1982 during a massive mudslide triggered by very heavy rainfall, which also caused widespread flooding in Santa Cruz. See <http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/article/ZZ/20120106/NEWS/120108207>

^{xiv} On October 17, 1989 at 5:04 pm the Santa Cruz area was struck by a 7.1 earthquake centered in the Forest of Nisene Marks area near Aptos. See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1989_Loma_Prieta_earthquake for more information on the widespread damage throughout the region due to this earthquake and see Irene Reti and Randall Jarrell, *The Loma Prieta Earthquake of October 17, 1989: A UCSC Student Oral History Documentary Project* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2006) at <https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/quake>

^{xv} 1989: CBS's 60 Minutes airs "Intolerable Risk: Pesticides in our Children's Food," highlighting a report by the Natural Resources Defense Council on the carcinogenic risks of the chemical Alar (Daminozide) a growth regulator sprayed on apples. Public outcry prompts Meryl Streep to appear later that year on the Donahue show supporting local farms and organic foods. This publicity has a tremendous impact on the growth of CCOF and the organic movement over the next decade.

^{xvi} See *Cultivating a Movement: An Oral History Series on Sustainable Agriculture and Organic Farming on California's Central Coast* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2010)

<https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/cultiv/home> This project included an oral history with Congressman Sam Farr and Farr was the keynote speaker for the opening celebration for the release of this oral history. See this same link for an audio recording of Farr speaking at this event at the UCSC Science and Engineering Library.

^{xvii} See "California's Tough Line on Apartheid," *New York Times*, August 31, 1986.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/31/weekinreview/california-s-tough-line-on-apartheid.html>

^{xviii} For a detailed account of the various sites considered for what became the UCSC campus see William Doyle, *UC Santa Cruz: 1960-1991*. Available in the UCSC Library and at <http://www.lulu.com/shop/william-t-doyle/uc-santa-cruz-1960-1991/paperback/product-22076853.html>

^{xix} The 2016 United States House of Representatives sit-in took place on June 22, 2016, when members of the House Democratic Caucus, led by Georgia Representative John Lewis and Massachusetts Representative Katherine Clark, declared their intention to remain on the floor of the House until Speaker Paul Ryan allowed votes on gun safety legislation in the aftermath of the June 12, 2016 shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The sit-in was staged by about 60 legislators. Many of the representatives recorded the sit-in on their cell phones and some of that footage was broadcast.

^{xx} See http://www.miis.edu/media/view/24222/original/judith_kildow_cv.pdf

^{xxi} <http://centerfortheblueeconomy.org/>

^{xxii} See <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/OSPR/About/History>

^{xxiii} [https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_30_Sales_and_Income_Tax_Increase_\(2012\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_30_Sales_and_Income_Tax_Increase_(2012))

^{xxiv} In 1988, the "Base Realignment and Closure" ("BRAC") legislation, which took into consideration the post-Cold War era was passed by Congress and signed by President George H.W. Bush.

^{xxxviii} See Randall Jarrell, Interviewer and Editor, *Henry J. Mello: A Life in California Politics* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2000) Available in full text at <https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/henry-j-mello>

^{xxxix} See “Fort Ord Dunes Now a State Park” San Francisco Gate, January 24, 2010.

<http://www.sfgate.com/travel/article/Fort-Ord-Dunes-now-a-state-park-3274949.php>

^{xl} On September 13, 2001, the Regional History Project conducted an oral history with John Laird, who was elected mayor of Santa Cruz in 1983 and was the first openly gay mayor in the United States. This was part of our Out in the Redwoods oral history series on GLBT history at UCSC. See <http://www.sfgate.com/travel/article/Fort-Ord-Dunes-now-a-state-park-3274949.php> In 2002, Laird went on to become one of the first two openly gay men to be elected to the California State Legislature (Assembly). He is now serving as California’s Secretary of Natural Resources.

^{xli} See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Lee

^{xlii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorization_for_Use_of_Military_Force_Against_Terrorists

^{xliii} On August 31, 2016, the Organic Farming Research Foundation and the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems jointly honored Congressman Sam Farr’s achievements in the organic sector by hosting a celebration “Farr Out” at the UCSC Hay Barn.

^{xliiii} Farr voted against the “Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002” (H.J. 114).

^{xliv} Michael Moore, “Where to Invade Next.” 2015. <http://michaelmoore.com/movies/where-to-invade-next/>

^{xlv} See Christopher Bacon, V. Ernesto Méndez, Stephen R. Gliessman, David Goodman, and Jonathan Fox (eds.), *Confronting the Coffee Crisis: Fair Trade, Sustainable Livelihoods, and Ecosystems in Mexico and Central America* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2008). Also see the oral history with Steve Gliessman at <https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/cultiv/gliessman>

^{xlvi} See http://www.ico.org/mission07_e.asp?section=About_Us

^{xlvii} Bert Muhly was a city planner and social/environmental activist who served two four-year terms on the Santa Cruz City Council. He and his wife cofounded Three Americas, a nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness and funds, often through the sale of fair-trade coffee, for communities in Central and South America. See <http://www.mercurynews.com/2011/12/16/bert-muhly-former-santa-cruz-mayor-and-icon-of-progressive-politics-dies-at-88/>

^{xlviii} See <http://www.matsuinursery.com/>

^{xlix} Pie Ranch is an experiential education farm located on the coast near Pescadero, California. Visit their farm stand and sample their pastries made with locally grown heirloom wheat and organic berries. See <http://www.pieranch.org/who-we-are.html>

^l See <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/lpnf/specialplaces/?cid=stelprdb5097577&width=full> for more information on wilderness areas within the Los Padres National Forest.

^{li} See <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/>

^{lii} “A late-90s study by the Logan Bee Lab at Utah State University found about 400 species of bees in Pinnacles National Park. Incredibly, that is one fourth of all of the bee species in California, and more bee species per unit area than any place on Earth ever studied.” See:

<http://benitolink.com/bees-abound-pinnacles-national-park>

^{liiii} See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hastert_Rule

^{liiii} Ellen Farmer and other activists worked to establish a “sister county” with Guamá, Santiago Province, Cuba in 2003. Sam Farr attended the signing ceremony with a fifty-citizen delegation from Santa Cruz and Monterey.

^{liiii} The painting is by renowned Cuban artist Aguedo Alonso. See <http://www1.ucsc.edu/currents/02-03/02-24/painting.html>

^{liiii} Farr added the following comment during the editing process in September 2017: “After this interview, the Colombian voters rejected the accords; the legislature, after lots of changes, adopted it by a two-thirds vote. It’s now a struggle to get it work.”

^{liiii} See <https://www.medicareresources.org/basic-medicare-information/brief-history-of-medicare/>

^{liiii} Farr added the following comment during the editing of this transcript in September of 2017: “Since Trump all of this is out the window. I never though responsible legislators could be so reckless and irresponsible for health care in America.”

³⁰ See “Donald Trump’s Mexico Visit Ends with Mexico Disputing his Comments,” *Washington Post*, August 31, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/08/31/donald-trump-says-he-didnt-ask-mexico-to-pay-for-the-wall-that-makes-no-sense/?utm_term=.04d0245f1642 and <http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/30/politics/donald-trump-enrique-pea-nieto-mexico/>

³¹ See <http://www.partnersfortransitions.com/all-together>

³² Peterson was elected to the Capitola City Council in 2016.

³³ Jimmy Panetta did win election in November 2016 as the assemblymember representing California’s 20th congressional district, the seat formerly occupied by Congressman Sam Farr.

³⁴ In August 2006, a load of baby spinach from the Paicines Ranch in San Benito County, California contaminated with E. coli 0157:H7 was mixed in with several other batches of spinach being processed. Within a few weeks, over two hundred people fell ill, and many of them ended up in the hospital. Two elderly women and a young child died from acute kidney failure. Organic and conventional growers reeled from the effects of this outbreak, which was ultimately linked to contamination from cow manure.

³⁵ Proposition 215, the Compassionate Use Act, was passed by the voters of California in 1996.

³⁶ A referendum later known as Brexit was held on June 23, 2016, to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union. It won by 51.9% to 48.1%. The referendum turnout was 71.8%, with more than 30 million people voting.