

**Glenn M. Anderson Oral History Interview – JFK #1, 11/12/1970**  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Anderson, Lieutenant Governor of California from 1959 to 1967 and Representative from California from 1969 to 1993, discusses his political and business history, California politics during the 1950s and '60s, and his responsibilities as lieutenant governor, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Glenn M. Anderson

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Glenn M. Anderson – JFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Anderson's education
3	Offices Anderson held in local and state politics
6, 25	Anderson's construction business
8	California politics
12	Winning the office of lieutenant governor of California
15	Setting up study-abroad programs as a member of the California Board of Regents
17	Issues dealt with by the State Lands Commission
22	California-Chile program
27	Winning a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1968
29	Salaries of political officeholders
32	John F. Kennedy in California in 1956

First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Glenn M. Anderson

November 12, 1970  
Los Angeles, California

By James A. Oesterle

For the John F. Kennedy Library

OESTERLE: Why don't we start out, Congressman Anderson, with a biography of your own political career. You graduated from UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles], I believe.

ANDERSON: Yes, well, the district, the 17th District, that I represent is basically the home area that I was born in. My folks were the first family to settle Hawthorne in 1906, and I was born some years later in Hawthorne and went to school in the Hawthorne area, Inglewood High School. I received my AB degree at UCLA in political science-

[-1-]

psychology. And I'm still in that same district. Hawthorne is part of the 17th district so I haven't drifted very far.

During this time I've been in various phases of and levels of political activity as well as business. I've had to earn my own way. We're not a wealthy family, and so I've had to earn my own way as I progressed in politics. And I mention that because I didn't receive my education in the way that most people do, going four years to college and getting their AB degree. I think it took me twenty-five years to scratch it out. I would go and take a few units on campus; and I did it by correspondence; and I went to summer school; and I did.... Over

the years, while I was working, I finally acquired enough units to receive the AB degree. So it's a little different than what many others have experienced.

[-2-]

During this time I opened up, originally a service station, which I built into a very successful automotive parts and automobile agency. I had the Willy Agency plus a very large and, we felt, successful automotive parts establishment that serviced the whole southwest area, again which includes much of the same district that I now represent. So all of these things contributed to my developing contacts in the area, people who've known me for a long time.

It was at that time that I was first asked to run for city council in Hawthorne. A group people who knew I had built a successful business in a matter of a few years asked me to run for city council when I was twenty-five years of age. And I ran and I was defeated by, I believe, eighteen votes. I carried most of the city and lost one precinct that kept me from being elected.

[-3-]

Two years later I was elected and I was made mayor of the city at the age of twenty-seven. I was the youngest mayor in the United States and received some national and international publicity at that time by being the youngest mayor in the country. And during the same time, I was building my business because mayor of a little city doesn't pay very much. And I was mayor and councilman for just about three years. In the meantime, I became the party nominee for the state legislature. And I resigned the position of mayor when I went to the state legislature.

I served one very brief term in the state legislature, waived my legislative deferment and joined the United States Army as a private. I served in the army for just a little less than two years, and I was given a--well, I had ruptured my appendix at Fort Benning, and I was given a discharge. At the same time, I was reelected to the state legislature. And I served again,

[-4-]

three more terms following that, in the state legislature in California. So I served in the California legislature from 1943 to 1951. I left the state legislature when I ran for the senate. The state senate in California at that time included my district: it included all of Los Angeles County. And I ran against a Senator Kenny [Robert W. Kenny] who was quite a right-winger at that time. And I missed my election by less than one vote a precinct--less than a quarter vote a precinct, I believe it was. It was a very, very close election. But that put me out of public office; I was still in business.

In the meantime, I had changed my business. When I went into the army I had to, obviously, close down everything that I had, my motor parts store, everything. We just sold it out, sold it out at quite a sacrifice. And when I came back from the service, I knew I was going to be in or

[ -5 -]

hoped I was going to be in politics, and so I went into a business that I could turn off and on. And that was property, building houses and trying to sell them. And I would buy two or three or four lots, and I would build two or three or four homes, and I would hopefully sell them at a profit enough to keep me going while I was serving in the state legislature.

OESTERLE: You were acting as a contractor...

ANDERSON: No. I was a spec builder. I would buy lots and I would build the house myself as an owner-builder. And then when I finished them, I would sell them to a buyer, and hopefully there would be enough difference that I would be able to take money and buy another lot. And this is how I was moving. In those days property was fairly cheap. The legislature was fairly cheap, too. I think we got a hundred dollars a month. So it wasn't a very lucrative job.

[ -6 -]

OESTERLE: You would subcontract the plumbing and electrical work.

ANDERSON: Yes. I would sub.... Much of it I would do myself. The legislature usually met from January until June, six months, seven months, five months, depending on how long it was. And so I would have four or five months at the end of the year, the regular year. And then the following year, we have the budget session, which is two or three months. And then I had maybe eight months that year to work. So if I would get a couple of houses started, I would be out there working on them. I would do a lot of the painting, a lot of the priming. I did much of the rough work that didn't, in any way, conflict with these subcontractors who were doing other things. Some of the work I tried to do in all of them myself. And, as I say, hopefully trying to make enough money to keep me in the legislature and also to be able to buy other properties. And I did this, and I was reasonably successful.

And in

[ -7 -]

1951, when I left the state legislature, the party then felt, because of my activity in the legislature and my work in the community, that I would be a good state chairman. I had, prior to that, been the County Chairman of the Los Angeles County Central Committee. And so I then moved in and became the state chairman of the Democratic party in California, and I served in that position from 1950 to '52 or '51 to '53--I forget now--he years overlapped there--for two years. And they were very bleak years as far as the Democrats were concerned. That was the year that Truman [Harry S. Truman] went out and Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] went in. And there were some other...

OESTERLE: He carried a lot of people on the ticket with him.

ANDERSON: There were a lot of... It was a rough year. It was a very bad period. I was state chairman at that time, but I was not in public office.

[-8-]

I then spent more time building, and I again was reasonably successful.

Then I became fairly active in the development of the club movement. As state chairman I was also active in the development of the club movement. As county chairman I was very active in developing the club movement in Los Angeles County. And we had multiplied the number of clubs in Los Angeles County, chartered clubs, from, I think, under my administration, some dozen to about a hundred and ten in two years. So we started a very blossoming club movement in California in the 1949-50-- when I was county chairman. And then when I became state chairman, we encouraged this on a statewide basis. And I think this had a great deal to do with the develop of the club movement later on that formed the California Democratic Council that was successful, some years later, in helping us carry the state for the Democrats.

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[-9-]

1953 we formed the California Democratic Council which was an organization consisting of basically, volunteer Democratic clubs throughout the state. Alan Cranston [Alan M. Cranston] became the state chairman, and I became the chairman for Southern California. And this was a position that we held up until the time that we both became candidates for statewide office in 1958. Alan had a longer period as state chairman. I think I didn't come in as the southern chairman, the vice chairman for the south, until a year or two after it was formed. But I was active in the local levels with the organization. And this was a prime group that helped me in my campaign, helped all of us.

It was the endorsement of the club movement that gave me one of my main pushes because I was the only one--well, I was the one statewide candidate on the Democratic ticket who was running against a very popular incumbent. In the case of

[-10-]

Governor Brown [Edmund G. Brown], he was running not against an incumbent. The Republicans were having a problem of musical chairs at that time. Senator Knowland [William Fife Knowland], who was the majority leader, wanted to get rid of--well, he wanted to be governor and so he forced the then Governor Knight [Goodwin J. Knight] to run for the Senate. And so there was some unhappiness there. Governor Brown was really running for an open seat. Pat Brown was not the governor at the time.

I was running against Butch Powers [Harold J. Powers] who was a very popular Californian, a fellow who they felt would win both party nominations in the primary. In those days we had cross filling, where you ran.... If you were a Democrat, you ran as a Republican--nobody knew what your registration was because it didn't show on the primary

ballot. And a fellow like Butch, who was very, very well liked, everyone felt was going to win not only his own

[-11-]

Republican nomination but my Democratic nomination. And so we, my wife [Lee Dutton Anderson] and I, campaigned up and down the state for many, many months, almost a year prior to election. We won the nomination, which surprised everybody, and then we went ahead to unseat him in the November election. And so I became lieutenant governor of California, and that put me back in the political office holding picture.

That also meant that I had to stop my property-construction business. And so we stopped anything that we had.... Well, we'd really stopped it for the campaign. I mean when you're campaigning you can't do much anyway. But we then knew for at least four years we'd be lieutenant governor, so we did not do any more work in our properties. We hired a manager to handle our business for us, to collect rents and keep things going. And I served four years as lieutenant governor, ran again and was elected to another four years. And I think I'm the only lieutenant governor to run for a third term.

[-12-]

And I was defeated in the Reagan [Ronald W. Reagan] landslide. And Bob Finch [Robert H. Finch], the fellow who became the Secretary of HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] was the one who beat me. And so I lost in my campaign for the third term.

As lieutenant governor, I had some fairly interesting jobs that were mine--some because of the constitutional requirements the lieutenant governor serves in those jobs, others because I was appointed to them. For example, I was the president of the state senate for eight years, and my job as the presiding officer of the senate was to do what I could to get twenty-one votes for our programs in the state legislature to get through. And I think our program was quite successful.

I served as a member of the regents of the university for eight years. And I had one of the best regent attending records of anyone, constitutional

[-13-]

or otherwise. As a matter of fact, not too long back, when I had.... For one of my fund-raising deficits, former president of the university Clark Kerr came down and made what he said was the only time he'd ever made a speech for a political candidate, when he was the main speaker at a fund-raising dinner for me to help me raise funds for my deficit that had incurred the third time around. And he made it very clear that time that he had regarded me as one of the best regents the University of California had ever had.

At the same time, I was also a member of the trustees of state colleges. We had, during our administration, put together the program that put all these scattered colleges into one statewide system where we had eighteen state colleges. And I, again, worked very close and very hard with the state college system in expanding and trying to get the new campus

[-14-]

sites. And so I had a wonderful experience with the educational system.

And maybe as an aside on that, I was one of the pioneers of the overseas educational program. And during a visit to Leiden just outside of Amsterdam in Holland, in early '59, I believe it was, I tried to get the first overseas program in California for any public school at Leiden. It's one of the oldest universities in the world, I guess over a thousand year old. And many of the old.... The pilgrims who came to this country, when they left England, before they came to this country, they lived in Leiden in Holland. And many of the people who came and founded various old towns that are now dotting the East Coast were living in Leiden first, and I thought this would be a great tie to have our first overseas program at Leiden.

And I remember meeting with what would be comparable to their regents there,

[-15-]

to their leadership, and explaining to them what our growth figures were and how many people we expected to grow each year. And of course, we had talked in terms of thousands and they thought that a matter of growth of forty would be an unbelievable amount to cope with. We never were able to put it across. I brought the recommendation back to the regents. We never were able to sell that.

And shortly following that, we did have our first overseas program at Bordeaux, France. And, of course, I've been very closely involved with the overseas program. I was on the negotiating team that set up the overseas campuses at Brighton in Sussex in England, and at Birmingham in England, and at Edinburgh in Scotland. I made the dedicatory talk, I guess, if you would call it that, when we opened our first--the program at Madrid in Spain. I was involved in the initial negotiations with the

[-16-]

one that resulted in Hong Kong, or just outside of Hong Kong. And of course, my wife and I have visited with the students in Bordeaux, and Padua in Italy and Göttingen, Germany. As a regent, I was also active in the ones that established the one at Sweden and at Greece. So I've been quite close to the educational activities

I was one of the campaigners, statewide, making speeches up and down the state supporting the California Master Plan of higher education that we felt was exceptional at that time, and we were very proud of the university and state college system at that time. And I think history will show that during the period of the Brown administration the educational system in California universities and colleges was right at the very, very top. That was one of the areas I put much time in.

I was also a member of the State Lands Commission, a three-man commission

[-17-]

that consists of the controller, the director of finance and lieutenant governor. I was the first lieutenant governor to be chairman of that commission. And I served as chairman for several years of the eight years tenure. And again, we did many things in the state lands that we're very proud of. I think one of the ones that received some attention was the first repressurization programs, I believe anywhere--I know anywhere in California--and I believe anywhere else--where we pumped salt water down in to stop the sinking of land where communities were settling so much each year. And this happened down off the coast of--off Long Beach, Terminal Island, which is now in my district again, where, I guess, where parts of Terminal Island had sunk as much as thirty and forty feet. And some of the big buildings in Long Beach were starting to tip because the land was settling due to subsidence under

[-18-]

there. Well, we started the first repressurization program where we pumped the salt water down into these caverns and into these abandoned oil areas and where oil is taken out to keep the pressure up. And we didn't push the ground back up, but at least we halted subsidence. So now no one ever talks about any more sinking out there. Those places that had to be leveled are leveled, and no one is afraid of Terminal Island going under water because we've stopped that. And, of course, the second recovery of oil--when you pump down into these areas and you fill the vacancy that's made by taking oil out, it also helps push more oil out that normally, and in the past, would have been lost down in the middle of the earth, the bottoms of the earth. And by pumping the water down in there, we get this second recovery that has, as I understand, more than paid for the cost of repressurization. These were

[-19-]

things that were done under our administration at State Lands.

Also, we developed off the shores of Long Beach in conjunction with the City of Long Beach—but this was basically a state lands problem--the development of one of the biggest oil pools in the world. And we developed the contract--a system of breaking it up into units--that had, again, never been done before. And I was the pusher for that program. I was the one member that pushed it for some time before I was able to convince the other members that it was the way of doing it. So we broke up the contractual bid into competitive bids on a unit basis of oil out in a pool out on the water, which was very difficult to sell at that time. And it resulted in the highest returns that any governmental body has ever received from private bidders for oil in the history of oil, anywhere in the world. These are things

[-20-]

that I worked on. And I can talk about the State Lands activities on and on because it is an exciting period.

I was the first chairman of the Commission on Urban Affairs in California. I served on that till our permanent chairman came in, and then I served as a member of that commission until I resigned. I served on the first Commission of the Californias, again

until I resigned. There was the Reciprocity Commission, Reapportionment Commission, and several others that gave me understanding of the work of government that people often do not associate with the job of lieutenant governor. And in California the job of lieutenant governor is different than in other states. You do have so many other jobs that it's a fairly integral and important part of state government.

Following my defeat in 1966, I then had to determine what I was going to do, whether I would stay in government or go back

[-21-]

into business. I went back and I met with the California delegation. There was some feeling that I should be brought into the administration. I didn't want to take a job in Washington. We finally came up with the idea that, because we had been quite active in California on the California-Chile program--this was a federal aid program that, I believe, was initiated under President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy], where he wanted different states or different parts of the country that had a knowledge or a likeness or some camaraderie or something with a different part of the world, that that state become involved in handling the aid program. And in the case of Chile, Chile is very similar to California in that our coastline is somewhat the same. They're skinnier than we are; we have more depth. But the climate is very much the same, and I guess in the old days when the ships would go

[-22-]

around South America and come up the coast of Chile, they would stop there before they would come up to California. I understand that the poppies of California came from Chile. And many of the things that we now consider almost native to California came from Chile. And we've had a good relationship with the Chilean people and with California. And so, we in California were asked to help develop that program.

Well, I liked the idea, and I know several times I met with people who had come up from Chile to visit California and then go to some specific agricultural area to study whatever we were doing so they could take it back and maybe do the same things in Chile. I met with several of these during my tenure. I know I met with the ambassador two or three times at dinners that we had in Sacramento for him that Governor Brown had held.

[-23-]

I worked quite close with the, again, university people who were going down to Chile to help them on this program. They would usually come to my office, and I would set things up with them because they knew of my interest in the Chilean program.

As a result of this, I was able to get my administrative assistant, Alan Sieroty, who is now an assemblyman in the Beverly Hills area, I was able to get him appointed as the number two man in the Chile-California Program. The top man went to Chile and worked out of Chile. The number two man stayed, basically, here. But Alan Sieroty did much of the work in arranging these trips, these visitations, the studies between the two, between California and Chile.

So I have some knowledge of this field. And so the California delegation felt that I'd be their ambassador and they unanimously recommended me

[-24-]

for this. Governor Brown felt that I was probably the top guy that should receive something and he urged this appointment. It never developed. I went back and met with most of the key leaders back there. You mentioned \_\_\_\_ back a while ago. I talked with him, and I talked with Rusk [Dean Rusk] and different ones, the President and others. And nothing ever came out of it.

So I eventually went back into the home construction business. I formed a property holding corporation to acquire some lots that I would build on. Then I formed a separate building corporation that would do the building for us, so that--this is a recommendation, a process that the attorney and the accountant recommended for problems of liability and things. So I took some time to get these things going, to acquire some properties and some options and

[-25-]

to get some financing

So I started building some homes in the Redondo beach area. I had a program of about, oh, twenty-five homes that I had scheduled, and we had just completed about the twelfth one or tenth one or somewhere in that area--I guess we'd just completed the starting of the tenth or twelfth one when Congressman King [Cecil R. King], late in February 1968, announced that he was not going to run again. And so I had to make up my mind whether I was going to stay in the home construction business or run for Congress.

I didn't have to make up my mind overnight because the fact that I didn't know whether I was going to win or not had something to do with it. And while I decided to run, there were.... Eight Democrats ran, and there were, I think, six Republicans. So I assume each of the fourteen of us felt he might be the congressman. And I know that I had some

[-26-]

very strong opponents. The former president of the Los Angeles City Council, John Gibson, who was the councilman for this area, felt that he would win. And several.... The mayor of Lawndale, a city councilman of Redondo Beach, several of them ran. But I was able to win the Democratic nomination and went on to win the election in late '68. And it wasn't until November '68 that I really knew that I was not going to be building homes anymore.

OESTERLE: Who was the Republican...

ANDERSON: Blatchford [Joseph H. Blatchford], who became the head of Peace Corps, was my opponent. And it was so close that on the night of election on the 11 o'clock news or midnight, he told how he had won the election and explained how he had won by exposing my bad record in public office. But two hours later,

when the eventual votes came in, I won by some five thousand. This time, in the reelection I just came through, I have

[-27-]

increased that to.... I won by something like thirty-five thousand, so, in fact, we were very happy that we won with that margin. And we did not expect it. I thought I would win by maybe fifteen thousand votes, hopefully twenty, and we would have probably settled for ten thousand. We felt anything above five thousand was a gain. But the fact that we won by thirty-five thousand votes was quite a.... It made us feel very good.

So, it was then roughly, when I first went back to Congress in January of '69 that I knew I was going to have to taper off the building, although I still had the lots going and I had workmen doing some cleanup work and finishing. And again, we never know in this business when you're going to be back looking for something to do. We don't have a contract, just a two-year contract. It was, I think, mid-January '69 that I finally

[-28-]

severed--I let all the employees, the two fellows remaining, go that were with me. And I have done nothing in construction of any kind since that time. And, of course, now with this recent election, I think it's pretty apparent that I'm not going to be doing any for another two years, and so we'll probably be dissolving the building corporation and, maybe, keeping the property owning corporation because there are still some properties in it and some debts and things that we have there.

Now that basically brings me up to date with my biography in business. Mine has been a record of where I've had to fit my businesses, my jobs, my whatever you would call it, in between the various offices that I have held. Most of the offices have been nonpaying or little paying. As mayor of my city, if I remember right, it wasn't over fifty dollars a month. As state legislator, it was a hundred dollars a month for the first couple of

[-29-]

terms; then, I think it went up to three hundred dollars a month. As county chairman, there's no pay there, and I lost money there out of my own pocket. My activity in the CDC [California Democratic Council] was money out of my own pocket. The first paying job, really, was lieutenant governor. And, of course, the Congress pays quite well now, and that was done just before I got in. So, I want to thank whoever decided on that.

So I've had to.... You know, it's usually been rather stringent times. We are not wealthy. We are not poor, but we usually had to struggle for every dollar we've had in a campaign. And like the time that I was defeated for lieutenant governor, my third time around, I didn't even know I was going to have a deficit. The campaign committee that was running it was running a campaign and was spending the money, and I,

[-30-]

as a candidate, was running up and down the state speaking and meeting and doing every thing I could to get votes. And I wasn't too deeply involved in what was being committed, and we woke up, after being defeated, with a seventy-eight thousand dollar deficit.

Now, I'm not personally liable for that, but I've always had a political feeling or an ethical feeling that any debt that a candidate's committee runs up, he has some moral responsibility to try to help pay it off. So we set about--my wife and I set about there--to have various little fundraisers in different parts of the state, most of them in Los Angeles, to try to cut that seventy-eight thousand dollar deficit down. And I'm happy to say that it's paid off now. But it's just one constant effort, almost on a every six months or every.... At least once a year we've had some sort of a dinner that she

[-31-]

and I have tried to put on to raise money to pay off some deficit that still hangs out over our head.

OESTERLE: What were the ties between Governor Brown's office--to the best of your recollection--and the DNC [Democratic National Committee] and the "Kennedy for President" organization? Actually, the ties go back even before that, don't they?

ANDERSON: In 1956 I went back to Chicago as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. I had been state chairman. My wife and I were both there. And that was the first time that I remember Senator Kennedy, at that time, as a national figure. Prior to that time he was a...

OESTERLE: A prominent senator.

ANDERSON: He was a prominent senator. But we who were back there, that was the year that we nominated Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] and Kefauver [Estes Kefauver]. Yeah, Stevenson and

[-32-]

Kefauver the second time around. And California was pretty much committed that way. We'd been a very strong Kefauver state prior to that. We liked Kennedy, but.... I mean, we liked Kennedy. But we have strong Stevenson, strong Kefauver. We liked Kennedy. Kennedy's name came in, but if I remember right, we stayed pretty close to the Stevenson-Kefauver ticket. Two years later when we had our campaign, state-wide campaign, the one that was successful, when I ran for lieutenant governor, when Pat Brown was elected governor, when Clair Engle was elected United States senator and Alan Cranston then was elected state controller, then Senator Kennedy came out to California. And he was then a very attractive, young senator, had been, in a sense, a vice presidential contender at the previous Convention. So he was now a national figure. I'm not sure that many people

regarded him as presidential timber at that time, although he was in the field. And he came out and helped us in our statewide election. He

[-33-]

made appearances at different parts of the state. And Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] was with him.

OESTERLE: Do you remember any one or two instances, any specifics, any anecdotal stories perhaps, about any of these events?

ANDERSON: No. I remember the night that we had a dinner in Los Angeles. It was at a hotel on the west side. I've even forgotten the hotel. Senator Richards [Richard Richards] was our state senator here in Los Angeles. I don't remember whether governor--then Pat Brown, he would have been the attorney general. But none of us had been elected yet. Senator Kennedy was then the principal speaker. And the one thing I remember of the evening--well outside of the fact that we all had our pictures taken individually with Senator Kennedy, and I have a very nice picture of he and I upstairs with a little emblem, at that time, where we had.... Mr. Adler, I believe, who was a man who makes silvered things, things for your lapel, all kinds of little pins, had come up with a

[-34-]

real clever gimmick of a little silver broom. And out motto was "Sweep the State in, '58." And, of course, I have a little picture upstairs with Senator Kennedy with his little "Sweep the State" pin, and mine. And we were both much younger. This was 1958 that time. And we had individual pictures and we talked.

And I can't specific things that he said. But I remember the time; that was when Senator Richards was emceeing the program. And Senator Richards was, again, a very young, dynamic senator from California and the one who should have been elected to the United States Senate but just never quite made it. He was making a talk where he kept repeating the sentence, "I am concerned about such and such. And I am concerned about such and such. And I am concerned about this. And I'm concerned...." And then something knocked--all of his notes went to the floor. And he said, "I'm also concerned about my notes that just went on the floor." And then his whole speech was up the air. Well, this is the one thing I remember that night.

Senator Kennedy got up and spoke later.

[-35-]

And, again, a very nice, not a dramatic speech. It was a rather quiet, nice, impressive talk, one that we liked. But it was even shorter than Senator Richards'. Richards wasn't the main speaker. And several other times, I was with--that's one where it was a very formal affair. Several other times we were at different candidate functions together. I don't remember how long he was out. I think he was out here about a week, or he might have come out here

at two trips. I don't even remember that. But I believe there was once in San Francisco. And these are all vague in my mind now. I remember specifically the one in Los Angeles, and that was more because of Senator Richards problems about his notes flying all over.

[-36-]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Glenn M. Anderson Oral History Transcript – JFK #1  
Name List

**A**

Adler, Mr., 34  
Anderson, Lee Dutton, 12, 17, 31

**B**

Blatchford, Joseph H., 27  
Brown, Edmund G., 11, 17, 23, 25, 32, 33, 34

**C**

Cranston, Alan M., 10, 33

**E**

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 8  
Engle, Clair, 33

**F**

Finch, Robert H., 13

**G**

Gibson, John, 27

**K**

Kefauver, Estes, 32, 33  
Kennedy, Jacqueline B., 34  
Kennedy, John F., 22, 25, 32, 33, 34, 35  
Kenny, Robert W., 5  
Kerr, Clark, 14  
King, Cecil R., 26  
Knight, Goodwin J., 11  
Knowland, William Fife, 11

**P**

Powers, Harold J., 11

**R**

Reagan, Ronald W., 13  
Richards, Richard, 34, 35, 36  
Rusk, Dean, 25

**S**

Sieroty, Alan, 24  
Stevenson, Adlai E., 32, 33

**T**

Truman, Harry S., 8

