

ORANGE COUNTY PACIFIC COAST FREEWAY

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Descriptive Summary

Title

Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway

Date

1976

Creator

Barry Leigh

Extent

Seven (7) oral histories

Repository

Center for Oral and Public History
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Project Abstract

This project was created as part of Barry Leigh's community history class at California State University, Fullerton. He interviewed residents and local politicians of Newport Beach and Costa Mesa, as well as transit engineers from the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) and the Division of Highways. The goal of the project was to gage the various perspectives on the proposed Pacific Coast Freeway, a plan that emanated in the early 1960s. It came about due to a rise in state population, as well as heightened traffic patterns. Leigh's focus is in Orange County's coastal areas, specifically Costa Mesa, Newport Beach, and Laguna Beach. Controversy erupted between local area residents, mainly between Costa Mesa and Newport Beach, who resisted the idea of a highway "in their backyard." Neither city wanted the freeway in their jurisdiction as it would—they argued—jeopardize housing values, local economies, and the environment. After years of controversy and lack of resolution, the project was eventually deleted by Governor Ronald Reagan, and subsequently, alternate routes were adopted.

Project Abstracts

OH 5251

Narrator: HOWARD ROGERS
Interviewer: Barry Leigh
Date: April 8, 1976
Location: Newport Beach, CA
Language: English
Project: Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway
Audio Format(s): CD; digital
Length: 01:04:06
Transcript: Verbatim; 24 pp
Collateral: None

Abstract:

An oral history with Howard Rogers, resident of Newport Beach. The purpose of this interview was to gather information about Rogers' memories on the proposed Pacific Coast Freeway (early 1960s, which would have stretched through the heart of Newport Beach and jeopardized ocean views. Topics include Rogers' stint on the Newport city council and sponsoring the deletion of the Pacific Coast Freeway, lobbying Sacramento; local anti-freeway coalition, the Freeway Fighters; his opinion on the California State Highway Commission; the pro-freeway stance of the city of Costa Mesa; his opinions on a list of key players surrounding the issue; initiating the local referendum (a local charter to protest the freeway); coverage of the *Daily Pilot* newspaper; his feelings about when he heard that the freeway plan was finally deleted; the attempts at compromise; and finally, praise for his friend Bob Kercher, his quiet involvement and record keeping for the cause.

OH 1491

Narrator: CARROLL BEEK (deceased 1981)
Interviewer: Barry Leigh
Date: June 17, 1976
Location: Newport Beach, CA
Language: English
Project: Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway
Audio Format(s): CD; digital
Length: 01:00:35
Transcript: Verbatim; 24 pp
Collateral: Memorial service of Carroll Beek, *Los Angeles Times* 1981

Abstract:

An oral history with Carroll Beek, resident of Newport Beach. The purpose of this interview was to gather information about Beek's memories on the proposed Pacific Coast Freeway (early 1960s, which would have stretched through the heart of Newport Beach and jeopardized ocean views. Topics include Hoag hospital's anti-freeway protests; Beek's personal participation as a "freeway fighters" as well as key participants; fundraising and awareness for the cause; organizations that favored the freeway's construction; opinions from adjacent cities; opinions from local Congressmen; Bill Spurgeon; Al Forregut; Beek's opinion on the future of traffic in Newport Beach.

OH 1492

Narrator: DUFFIELD, MARSHALL
Interviewer: Barry Leigh
Date: June 22, 1976
Language: English
Project: Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway
Audio Format(s): CD; digital
Length: 00:55:58
Transcript: Verbatim; 24 pp
Collateral: None

Abstract:

An oral history with Marshall Duffield. The purpose of this interview was to gather information on Duffield's memories regarding the Pacific Coast freeway project deletion. Topics include the freeway's proposed route through Newport Beach; the jeopardy placed on Hoag Hospital and the traffic pattern; Duffield starting the anti-freeway campaign; Newport Beach vs adjoining cities, such as Laguna Beach and Costa Mesa; gathering signatures; changing the city charter of Newport Beach; Senate hearings; highway engineers; the role of environmentalism in warding off the freeway; Duffield's role as chief fundraiser for Hoag Hospital, against the freeway; rallying political support; the role of The Irvine Company; city council politics; and the future of transportation in Newport Beach.

OH 1493

Narrator: WILSON, ROBERT
Interviewer: Barry Leigh
Date: July 8, 1976
Location: Santa Ana, CA
Language: English
Project: Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway
Audio Format(s): CD; digital
Length: 01:19:35
Transcript: Verbatim; 34 pp
Collateral: None

Abstract:

An oral history with Robert Wilson, a former mayor of Costa Mesa. The purpose of this interview was to gather information on Wilson's memories regarding the Pacific Coast freeway project and its eventual deletion. Topics include Wilson's history of public service in Costa Mesa; the question of location for the Pacific Freeway; traffic engineering; traffic problems in Costa Mesa; the inertia caused by politics; green line vs red line freeway plans; assemblyman Bob Battin of Newport Beach; the role of The Irvine Company; the politics behind Hoag Hospital; Wilson's opinion on local and state politicians; California Highway Commission; the need to improve transportation in Costa Mesa and Newport Beach; the role of environmentalism in the fight against the Pacific Coast Freeway.

OH 1494

Narrator: JONES, GORDON
Interviewer: Barry Leigh

Date: July 12, 1976
Location: Newport Beach, CA
Language: English
Project: Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway
Audio Format(s): CD; digital
Length: 01:17:51
Transcript: Verbatim; 33 pp
Collateral: None

Abstract:

An oral history with Gordon Jones, a civil engineer at The Irvine Company. The purpose of this interview was to gather information on Jones' memories regarding the Pacific Coast freeway project and its eventual deletion. Topics include Jones' professional history; his early knowledge of the proposed Pacific Coast Freeway; Irvine Company lands designated as freeway cites; the recommendation of an inland route instead; Costa Mesa vs Newport Beach; opinions of city council members, specifically Dee Cook, Bob Battim; Jones' interactions with Bill Hashimoto; state senate hearings; alternative plans and routes for the freeway; local newspaper coverage of the freeway plan; and how the freeway plan was voted against, but no alternative decision ever came about.

OH 1495

Narrator: HASHIMOTO, WILLIAM
Interviewer: Barry Leigh
Date: July 16, 1976
Location: San Francisco, CA
Language: English
Project: Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway
Audio Format(s): CD; digital
Length: 01:32:28
Transcript: Verbatim; 32 pp
Collateral: None

Abstract:

An oral history with Bill Hashimoto, an employee at the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans). The purpose of this interview was to gather information on Hashimoto's memories regarding the Pacific Coast freeway project and its eventual deletion. Topics include Hashimoto's professional background; his recollections on the Pacific Coast Freeway and the impossibility of reconciliation; Costa Mesa vs Newport Beach; his personal role in the project; the process of freeway construction; green line vs red line plans; problems with routing; controversy with Hoag hospital; land acquisition process for highway construction; specific individuals involved, such as Edward Telford; The Irvine Company; freeway revolts; the role of growing environmental concern; Banford Franklin and California Public Works; Governor Pat Brown vs Governor Ronald Reagan administrations; and the future of highway transportation.

OH 1496

Narrator: TELFORD, EDWARD
Interviewer: Barry Leigh
Date: July 8, 1976

Location: Santa Ana, California
Language: English
Project: Orange County Pacific Coast Freeway
Audio Format(s): CD; digital
Length: 02:02:47
Transcript: Verbatim; 37 pp
Collateral: None

Abstract:

An oral history with Edward Telford, District Engineer for District Seven (Sacramento County), at the California Division of Highways. The purpose of this interview was to gather information on Telford's memories regarding the Pacific Coast freeway project and its eventual deletion.

Topics include Telford's professional background in transportation; his main occupation doing traffic studies; the origins of the California freeway system; development and evolution of Pacific Coast Highway; routing the proposed Pacific Freeway; factors that impeded the Pacific Freeway; the role of environmentalism; the legislative process of building freeways; acquisition of Newport Beach land for freeway construction; freeway hearings in California; acquisition of land for Cal State Los Angeles; prohibiting future highway construction along California coastal areas.