managed to gather up with Bean's knowledge, options to land where the Community
Concourse now exists without the knowledge of the City Council. They just
went ahead and did it and then presented the City Council with a fait accompli
without even the authorization of the Council to negotiate. You can imagine
what would happen if that occurred today; they wouldn't even think of doing
it. But, it created something, you know, it went around. Short cuts were the
way to do things in the old days. But, they don't occur today and some people
decry that and some others say it's a good thing that we're able to work much
more leisurely now, and think things out and not plunge into things. Others
say, well you just don't get anything done today like you used to in those
old days when things, projects, were created, which have benefited San Diego.
Can you imagine, today, how long it would take to approve the creation of
Mission Bay Park? If every? You know the environmentalists would say, there are
a lot of endangered species in that mud slew, you know, and the Least Terns
must not be tampered with, whereas in the late 1940's, when this began, there
was a vision and people carried it out, and now we have one of the greatest
tourist attractions and assets to the people of San Diego and the whole country.
But if they started Mission Bay today, do you think we'd have it done by the
year 2000 Neil?

NM: Now, the whole idea of entrepeneurism is negated by the mood of legislation,
I think both nationally and locally today by the EIR and by everything else.
We have Wick Corporation here, a billion dollar corporate headquarters which is
now spending more on compliance in every year than its total net earning
eight years ago. From the corporate point of view, this is devastating and
precludes any dramatic development.

CC: I think another thing that ties in with that too is that there's a
difference because of these kinds of requirements and the tremendous amounts
of money that is involved -- there's a difference in the energy and initiative with which a developer does things. You could take somebody like Spreckels, let's say in the past, or in the more recent times somebody like Irvine Kahn or C. Arnhold Smith who could put a package together in a relatively short period of time because there weren't the same kinds of requirements, either in terms of government permits or the financing complexities. And now, I look at the glacial pace with which the Horton Plaza redevelopment, you know, retail shopping center has been moving along, and what I hear is the Hahn Corporation saying we're not going to make our commitment, we're not going to put our money in until we get those commitments from the city, that there will be transportation, there will be a marina, there will be a convention center, and so on. And the Pardee Developers who are interested in doing the housing in the marina development are saying the same kinds of things -- you know, what kinds of commitments do we get from the City, what kind of guarantees do we have that certain kinds of land will be bought up and made available to us. And, I thought, gee, this is a real switch from the role of the hard-fisted businessman in the past who would have said I'll just go out and build it.

**MI:** But the trouble is, both in politics and in the corporate world, there are fewer people willing to take the risks which have, in the past at least, led to the things of which we are most proud.

**HK:** It's because it takes so long to materialize the conception that during this period of high inflation, by the time they get started, the costs are two and three times as much as when they began planning. Also, I think that the mood of the electorate today might be somewhat different than it was a dozen years or so ago. You notice in the last election on November 7, the voters rejected the sale, the proposed sale of about 400 acres of city owned pueblo lands for conversion into industrial parks where clean industries of the electronic
type would be established, providing employment. I wonder whether given the mood of the electorate today, on the basis of that vote, whether they would have approved the turnover to the University of California of a thousand acres or so virtually free, just giving it to them, not selling but virtually giving it to them; and of the Salk Institute back in the 60's.

CC: Well, I wonder whether this wasn't complicated though by the fact that these weren't just going to be for private industry, but that the pueblo land was going to be sold.

HK: Rather than leased?

CC: Yes, you see it might be possible to work out something so that the ownership of the land would be retained and, I think, to virtually give away land to an organization such as UCSD or the Salk Institute was viewed and would still be viewed by people in a different light.

HK: Doesn't this show, perhaps, a measure of ineffectiveness of our current leadership, because virtually every major city official, and this was one of Pete Wilson's pet projects, these particular proposals, K and L on the ballot -- doesn't that indicate an element of weakness in our leadership in not being able to rally people behind projects of that nature? We were able to do that in the 1960's -- you know there was a lot of opposition to turning the land over to the University of California. There were many people in La Jolla who feared a kind of invasion of a new type of intellectual that might change the community's character quite a bit. So, it wasn't easy to get it but, the civic leadership, then, and also the Salk Institute -- the same problem there -- the civic leadership of the City was strong enough to be able to get these projects in and so we were able to make great intellectual strides, and I think that ....

NN: But we still wanted growth then. A major element of the vote, perhaps, against these two of Wilson's pueblo land proposals is the fact that people
have seen the prices of housing run up too much, they've seen traffic run up too much -- so the "it's time to close the gates, we're in, let's keep the rest of them out" syndrome comes in, which of, course, can destroy us if it persists.

HK: Well, you see, there is a sort of schizophrenic type of leadership there. Wilson is for growth management and then here is is trying to have the people approve a City transfer of land which would increase the growth of our industrial base and increase the need for more housing for the people who work there.

NM: Wilson has still been misunderstood; he has fought desperately for growth but he wants to place it. He wants to place it; he wants to bring it back downtown, and he wants to place it in the small industrial areas. I think the only people that have been able to successfully create the illusion that he has fought against growth are the developers and subdividers who keep spreading miles out into the boondocks to create new fortunes for themselves and new communities which cost the tax payers insurmountable costs and new facilities.

PH: Well, is this perhaps the difference -- that one has to play this balancing act? In the first days of San Diego when Alonzo Horton came, he really had no reason to restrict his growth. In fact, he had all the options available. This was a new town at that time. San Diego is a full-grown city without really that much room for change -- do you think that's part of the way we do things?

CC: But we have lots of room left for growth. Only 50% or a little less, I think, of the area contained within the boundaries of the city, which is huge -- the fourth largest city in the United States -- is urbanized. That's why we have this really marvelous opportunity; it's a great challenge, but it's a marvelous opportunity to do good planning. Where is that growth going to occur and when? And, I think this is what Wilson and other proponents of managed growth have apparently been able to sell enough of to the electorate
to keep themselves in office.

HK: Isn't Wilson in some ways, then, a spiritual heir of Alonzo Horton who was the high priest of "centralized," when he established New Town San Diego -- to have a town built right around the plaza like the old Spanish towns in Europe. NM: It's a great irony because were we in an entrepreneurial age where big money could come in and do it all at once, San Diego is in a better position downtown to be leveled and recreated than any urban site I know in America, and could, perhaps, make the lovelies new city along three or four miles of the harbor in America. But, it would take the entrepreneurial genius and a lack of restriction in government -- no EIRs for instance -- fifty years ago, but not today. And today, the way it has to be done is so tendious that its future teeters, I think.

HK: If you had to depend on the vote of the people to approve the leveling and rebuilding of downtown, I dou whether you would be able to get this approval. NM: No one cares about dow town.

CC: Oh well, I don't agree with that. But also, I wouldn't want to see it all leveled. I would certainly hope that we would preserve some links with the past and this is, what I think is, a very hopeful development in contrast to the first proposals that were made for the Horton Plaza retail center which was to simply level everything and start from scratch, and start from scratch, and the new plans are to retain a number of the historic buildings in the area and to...

NM: But this has been by the efforts of the Gas Lamp Quarter people fighting very hard against CCDC [Center City Development Corporation]. They've won their battle at City Council.

CC: Well yes, but also, without the proposed Horton Plaza shopping area itself, the retention of some of the features in that area -- this has been a design concept which is very different from the one which was originally proposed.
I think this indicates a greater sensitivity to the area and also to linking it with some of these reminders of the past. I think that there are really a considerable number of people who care about downtown and what it looks like, and will come back downtown to shop and to go to the recreation center, the theaters, and so on, when there is more to do.

HK: Our transportation problem is a good example of the difference between methods of solution today and how they were solved, or potentially could be solved in the days of the one-man leadership. When Spreckels owned the transportation system, if it wasn't making money, he would change things around so it would make money, or else, he would pour some money into it and not worry about the deficit because he was making a profit on other things that the transportation system was serving. Today, we have a wobbly bus system that is having a very hard time keeping afloat. And we have to depend on a somewhat unwieldy type of committee method to keep it going. And so, that, perhaps is one of the penalties of cities growing to such a great extent without at the same time retaining some of the great centralized wealth that still exists, that old time wealth that exists like the Rockefellers in New York, the DuPonts in Delaware, the Fords in Michigan, and the many other large old eastern cities, and the Mellons in Pittsburgh. We don't have anything like that here anymore. We used to have the Marstons, the Jessops, people like that who could make decisions and get things done. Mr. Marston provided us with many civic amenities that would require an awful lot of red tape to get today. So that's the one thing, I think, we miss today is the very strong, patriarchal, philanthropically and civic minded people in this town.

NI: Among the top ten wealthiest people in San Diego County, at least five or six of them are virtually unknown. They have come from somewhere else fairly recently and contribute heavily to charities back home. The back-home
syndrome is one that is still killing us here because we come, but we still talk about back home.

HK: Yes, well, we're called a branch-industry town.

CL: Well, what you're saying reminds me of the remark that Long Beach is sometimes referred to as the western shore of Iowa, and San Diego, I suppose, a similar kind of thing there. So many people who do come here, as you and I did, come and still frequently have ties with the midwest or wherever they came from.

NM: Now I think we get into the area which causes me to be more pessimistic about the future because we are here, so many of us, because the living is easy. In the old days, there was the fortune hunter, the gold rush. And right on down through many of the twelve who shaped San Diego about which you've been talking about all these weeks, they were here as entrepreneurs because the west challenged them and they sought fortunes. The people who are here today are here more because the living is easy. We are squatters and we are in great danger of becoming a metropolitan Santa Barbara. We are increasingly and almost now totally owned, in terms of corporate life, by out-of-San Diego interests. If you need a contribution, it has to clear through a senior vice president in Los Angeles or San Francisco. The leadership fades with the branch office. I am reminded of one vivid statistic that continues to check out--there are 3500 corpses each year flown out of Los Angeles airport for burial back home. There are a lot of people who come out here who want to live here, but don't want to be caught dead here. This kind of thing gives us a rootless sense of squatter feeling here, and it reflects in the great emphasis on leisure and sports. And when I say that no one cares about San Diego, our newspaper surveys really show that, as Harold says, if it were put to a vote, nobody is going to make any great sacrifice for downtown. And yet, I think very seriously that's
where the future of the city has to lie if it's going to be anything more than a great big suburb of Los Angeles.

HK: Another problem is that we depend so much, in this town, on State and Federal largess to keep us going. We are not in a position to make all of our own decisions and make them stick; we have to depend on revenue sharing funds from the Federal government to keep our own services afloat and from the State, for instance, to effect a sixteen-mile trolley that's going in now between San Diego and San Ysidro. So our local government does not have the clout and the authority that it used to have years ago. When our City Council made a decision, it didn't have to double check to see whether the regulations complied with the State or Federal requirements; they didn't have to look elsewhere to Sacramento or to Washington, to keep running to those capitols. So, that, I think, is another factor that has kind of weakened, maybe not the will, but the ability of our decision-makers to be more decisive than they have been in the past. Don't you think that is a factor that has increasingly grown through the years?

NM: Here, and in every other city, also.

HK: But, combined with many of our other weaknesses which Neil has brought out, it exacerbates the situation.

CC: Another factor that I read about just recently in the community leadership survey -- Herb Fredman did a report on that -- and one of his conclusions was that perhaps we don't lack leaders so much as we lack consensus on goals and priorities, that leadership is fragmented and that there are no, let's say, dominant few individuals who come forth with particular kinds of programs and are able to carry them through, that we have many, many more groups with different values, different sets of priorities. Do you think this is true?

NM: Yes, I think the leadership game that Harold and I and all the rest of us in the news business play at trying to come up with who the leaders are at
any given moment, is most dramatic in San Diego, perhaps more than in other cities because nobody stays on the list, nobody is in the top ten who was in the top ten five or ten years ago.

CC: Is this because people move from the area, or what are some of the reasons that you think cause this?

NM: Mobility is a factor in everything here, but in this case, it is a result of, well [pause] some have gone to jail, some have died ...

HK: Some have been defeated in elections like Jack Walsh who was one of the big movers and shakers at one time on the Board of Supervisors. Dick Silberman whom I once characterized as part of the great triple alliance of San Diego power and ...

CC: And who were the other two of that triple threat?

HK: Well, the other two were Helen Copley, who was an associate, I believe, of Neil Morgan's [laughter], and Pete Wilson. Those were the three top people in our power hierarchy, if there is any such thing here, up to about a year or so ago when Dick Silberman ... And Dick Silberman was one of the most unusual persons, I believe, ever to participate in a power structure in San Diego because he had his tentacles out in both directions. He was one of Pete Wilson's confidantes, he was head of the Centre City Development Corporation which was Pete Wilson's major project, before he leaves office, to get downtown redevelopment off the ground as it were. And at the same time, he was a confidante of Governor Brown. So very rarely have we seen a person in San Diego's power structure who could look in both directions and see friends who trusted him.

NM: And that didn't last long.

HK: And that didn't last very long. And at the same time he was a very close friend, I understand, of Helen Copley, so...

NM: Let's look at those three. Mobility, perhaps in Silberman's case -- he's
no longer a part of the San Diego power structure. Helen Copley is through the simple fact of the death of her husband and her inheritance of the newspaper...

HK: And her seizure of control, actually, to the surprise of the men who were around. But she has shown her dynamic qualities.

NM: But, she would not have had that opportunity except through death. The third one, Pete Wilson, was running for Governor, and if he had achieved what he wanted to do would be gone now also. The thing that this teaches me is that our leadership structure is no longer a matter of individuals, but of positions.

HK: That's true.

CC: Yes, yes. I think the whole concept of leadership is very different from what it used to be say prior to World War II. The importance of corporate structure, of, you know, somebody's position in a corporate structure, let's say, or of somebody's position, is by virtue of being elected or not being elected, makes a great deal of difference in leadership.

HI: I wanted to conclude all of this historical discussion with a hypothetical question about what someone looking back in fifty years might say -- what might the chapter title be of this time in a history book? What do you think are the crucial issues?

NM: Well, my favorite premise of how San Diego got this way to begin with is it failed to do everything big that its leaders tried to do. We were the western terminus of the Santa Fe's transcontinental railroad for a few months back in the late 80's; we lost that to Los Angeles. We were then going to be the biggest maritime center of Southern California which seemed completely obvious until Los Angeles extended its panhandle annexation to San Pedro and built an artificial harbor. And then, our leaders went off and formed an exposition which was probably one of the best things San Diego leadership ever did. Bringing the Navy was the other. But, we kept trying to bring roads;
"the road to romance" was a big theme about 1912 and it was blocked by Colonel Ed Fletcher simply because he quibbled a little bit over the route over the mountains to the east. I disagree with Dick Pourade that it was just the bumbling leadership over a century, right on till 1972 when we were told we were going to be in the big leagues in the convention industry because Nixon thought we were his lucky city and we were going to have the 1972 Republican Convention here. Well, Miami Beach bailed us out of it that time, not Los Angeles. But, because we failed to bring big industry, because we failed to bring railroads, factories, because we failed really to bring transportation we have clean air, a clean harbor, we have no smoke stacks to pollute our air and no industry along the water front, no shipping. Ensenada has more shipping than the port of San Diego now. The volume of shipping is greater in the town of Ensenada. So, we have a clean harbor. Now, this has resulted, for the moment, in a lovely place to live because environmental factors seem to be paramount these days, so we have our seventy miles of clean public beaches and clean air and clean water. But this is because all of these years we couldn't get it done -- what we wanted to do to make ourselves big. So now we have a natural repugnance toward bigness and a natural repugnance toward Los Angeles. And I think the suburban feeling of San Diego may grow, but in relation to Los Angeles, inevitably, but there is still considerable hostility between San Diego and Los Angeles. I think we may look back on this era as the moment when we finally realize that we couldn't continue to build an enjoyable place to live by blunders, and we either did or we didn't do it right. And I think maybe we have a fifty-fifty chance. I don't think we'll see a ground-swell of concern in the electorate, among newspaper readers, among television viewers. I think we're dealing with very temporal everyday self-obsessed interests, and I don't see any great ground-swell of concern about what happens to San Diego
as long as it remains a pleasant place to live -- unless the real threat that we can destroy it as a pleasant place to live is raised very rapidly and realistically. I think this is a period of transition toward that nice quiet metropolitan Santa Barbara where everybody will live happily or miserably ever after, depending on their own will and their own luck rather than any common civic zeal.

HK: Well, I think this era is being epitomized by the switch in our previous slogan of "city in motion" when growth was the predominant goal, of every action that the business community and the political forces took, to our current slogan of "America's finest city." We have a great preoccupation now with attempting to avoid becoming a Los Angeles type megalopolis, and fortunately, we have a terrible example of Los Angeles to help us in making our decisions here. And so we are now in the midst of struggle to avoid that terrible congestion and at the same time are attempting to maintain our economy on an even keel by creating the many new jobs that have to be created merely to take care of our new births here -- the people who are born here as well as some of the people who are coming in. We can't put a wall in front of San Diego and say you can't come in here. So, to retain the right to say that we are "America's finest city," I think, is the predominant theme of all of our major civic efforts in San Diego. It is increasingly becoming a magnet for people all over the country. San Diego is a city that is being discovered by more and more people -- thousands are moving in; an estimated 40 to 50 thousand people are coming in here every year -- that's the equivalent of a population of a city like National City. The critical zone will be the northern part of the county where there are still a lot of open spaces that can be properly planned. And there will be a tremendous challenge to our civic leadership to maintain the quality of life that we have enjoyed here, and luckily we are still enjoying despite the fact that we're importing
smog from L.A. and that we're creating our own smog. So, I think that historians in the future will be looking back at this era as the one in which we are struggling without any very positive, strong, decisive leadership yet, to retain the title of "America's finest city."

PH: Harold Keen, Channel 8 reporter, and regular contributor to San Diego Magazine. He was joined by Evening Tribune columnist and author, Neil Morgan, and by San Diego historian and chief consultant for this series, Dr. Clare Crane.