

GEORGE SKELTON, INTERVIEWED BY RICHARD EHISEN IN SACRAMENTO ON FEBRUARY 28, 2022

PART II

Rich Ehisen: Well, so let me ask you then, of course, of Jerry Brown. We've talked a lot about Pat, but Jerry. I mean, you think about California, you had Pat Brown, then Reagan, and then Jerry Brown. Those are three pretty consequential governors in a row in the biggest state in the country. What was your impressions of Jerry? Because he was so brash and so young when he came to office. He had the ability it seemed to be charming and also had the ability to be just absolutely the opposite of charming. By this time, you're a veteran, you've been around a long time, you've dealt with his father and Unruh and Reagan. What were your thoughts of Jerry Brown when he came into office?

George Skelton: I don't think Jerry Brown was nearly as consequential as Pat Brown or Ronald Reagan. I think Jerry Brown was a rock star. He's just the governor's son. Young guy. Girlfriend was a genuine rockstar. He was too ambitious. After all, he ran for president twice when he was governor and got it handed to him really, both times. And then again, even when he was out of office in 92, he ran for president. But he was in rebellion against his father during the first two terms of his four terms. When he was young, he'd keep his father waiting out in the governor's lobby. His father's coming to see him one time, and I was told his father waited four hours out there before he could get in to see his son. He didn't treat people well. Although, on the other hand, he's a fun guy to be around.

Rich Ehisen: He's very funny.

George Skelton: Yeah.

Rich Ehisen: Great sense of humor.

George Skelton: Well, he's very quotable. Press liked him because you could get a great quote out of him. And he was thoughtful, but he wasn't thoughtful for other people. That's my impression of him. He made a lot of mistakes. Rose Byrd, Chief Justice, never been a judge. That was one mistake.

Rich Ehisen: Well, let me ask you about that because I wanted to ask you about his legacy, and we could talk for hours just about Jerry. But you eventually, later on, wrote that you thought after his second time in office that he actually had been a more consequential governor. Had become one of the better governors, so it sounds like you think his second term, his second two terms in office, maybe redeemed his first two, do you. Is that correct?

George Skelton: I don't think I said he was one of the better governors, quite frankly. I gave him an A for having been the governor the longest. I mean, anybody who's elected governor four times, that's quite a feat. Served sixteen years. That's a long time as governor. Second time he was governor, he had married, he had settled down, his wife kind of kept him in check from doing really crazy things. More focused. He kept his stamp on the state banking account, so the

liberal Democrats couldn't spend as much as they wanted. He was a good fiscal conservative. Had a couple of monster failures. The bullet train. I mean, where are we today on the bullet train? He kept insisting that we keep doing this thing. Well it was voted for in 2008, this is 2022, not one track... Not one wheel is moved. He wanted to build twin tunnels in the Delta... That collapsed as soon as he left. They'll be lucky to build one tunnel now. Those are the two great projects that fell on their face.

Rich Ehsen: Well, what's his Well, what's his overall legacy, you think? Again, you covered the man for many, many decades... Well, yeah, cumulatively.

George Skelton: Give him credit for climate change. He wanted do something about that. His legacy is as an interesting rock star. I think that's his legacy. I can't point to a great policy legacy, except on the fiscal stuff. In the first eight years, he was so tight with the money, he's sitting on what Jess Unruh called an obscene \$5 billion surplus. And they kept trying to get a property tax relief through the legislature, and he could never agree on anything with the legislature. Finally, Howard Jarvis came up with Proposition 13, which I considered – and many people did – an extreme version of property tax relief. Because the legislature hadn't met that challenge, addressed the issue, people passed Prop 13, which we still have. And Jerry, of course, fought Prop. 13, but as soon as it passed, he welcomed it with open arms.

Rich Ehsen: Right, a born again tax cutter, yeah?

George Skelton: Tax cutter.

Rich Ehsen: Yeah, I remember that.

George Skelton: Yeah, right. And Howard Jarvis wound up endorsing him for re-election in November.

Rich Ehsen: Paddle to the left, paddle to right, right?

George Skelton: I like Jerry, he's a fun guy. I didn't like him real well as a human being though.

Rich Ehsen: Right. I've heard various different folks refer to him in various different ways. The word jerk comes up a lot, but so does other times, people note the sense of humor and the ability to be a very thoughtful person at times. That sounds like what you're saying as well.

George Skelton: Yeah.

Rich Ehsen: I'm going to go back really quick, because there were two assassination attempts on Gerald Ford here in California, three weeks apart. One in Sacramento, one I think was in San Francisco, if I'm not mistaken. And were you there to cover both of those?

George Skelton: No, I was not there for the second. I was there for the first.

Rich Ehsen: And that was, of course, before the thing had happened with Reagan in DC?

George Skelton: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, this was 1985. No, no, no. I'm sorry, 1975. I had just been transferred to LA to cover the presidential campaign. I was a national political writer, and Jerry Ford was coming out to speak to the Host Breakfast. Which there's a Jerry Brown story there. I'll tell you about it.

Whoever was governor always spoke to the Host Breakfast, a breakfast gathering of business and agriculture elite in California, and the governor always addressed them. Jerry had just been sworn in as governor, so they sent him an invitation. "Pick your date, when you want it." They never heard back from him. The guy was so discourteous, he never answered back to the Host Breakfast about even that he was going to be there. Just like for the Press Club. Every governor spoke to the Press Club until Jerry Brown. Never even answered the invitations. Well, when he didn't answer the Host Breakfast invitations, the head of the Host Breakfast committee said, "I know the President. I know Jerry Ford. I'll just call him." He called Jerry Ford and Jerry Ford came out and spoke to the Host Breakfast, the first and only president to ever do that. And he was walking across the street to pay a courtesy call on the governor when Squeaky Fromme pointed a gun at him and apparently tried to shoot him. I was up in a coffee shop with the Times' Bureau Chief, Tom Goff, having coffee. I didn't know anything about it till I got down in the lobby. Came down the elevator, my 14-year-old daughter came running by. I said, "Karen, what's going on?" She said, "Some girl just tried to shoot the president and I was standing right next to her." And she kept going. I said, "Hey, wait a minute. Tell me...and she says, "No, I've gotta go after Carl Ingram, he's going to interview me." Carl was then the UPI Bureau Chief. I said, "Karen, you're my daughter. Come here, we're going to talk about it." So we did.

Rich Ehsen: I get preference over another reporter.

George Skelton: Right.

Rich Ehsen: Oh man. So after the Jerry Brown years, we had two straight Republican governors, Pete Wilson and George Deukmejian, who were very different on many levels. Much less flamboyant, particularly Deukmejian. And I want to reference something you wrote in 2018, because you said George Deukmejian was, "Role model for the type of office-holder we desperately need in today's hyperventilated, polarized politics." Why do you feel that way?

George Skelton: He had tons of integrity. He was not a standby guy by any means. He was good at compromising. He's pretty conservative on stuff. But this was typical. When Reagan came into office, Pat Brown had left him a big deficit. So Reagan wanted to raise taxes and he raised them by a record amount. The author of his tax bill was George Deukmejian. George was a Republican, basically a conservative Republican, but he thought it was necessary for the state to raise taxes to balance the budget, so Deukmejian carried the bill. In 1983, Deukmejian's first year as governor, it looked like there's going to be a deficit, so he pushed through what they called a trigger tax. If the deficit got really big, the sales tax would go up. It never did, but he was willing to do that. He was willing to go against the grain of his own party on things like the divestment of funds in South Africa in order to speed up the elimination of apartheid discrimination against black people. He pushed for that. California divested in any industries that did business in South Africa. Republicans didn't care for that, but he did it. He pushed through

the state's first assault weapons ban, when there was a mass shooting at a school in Stockton.

Rich Ehsen: I remember that.

George Skelton: And just immediately he decided to endorse Democratic Dave Roberti's assault weapons ban. Dave Roberti and Michael Roos in the Assembly. And he endorsed their legislation and signed it. So he was a very moral, integrity guy who would compromise and, like Reagan, get half a loaf if he could.

Rich Ehsen: Well, it's interesting too, because he was known as the Dull Duke when he was in the legislature, but when he became governor, eventually they started calling him the Iron Duke, right?

George Skelton: Well, okay, I may have been the first person to call him Dull Duke. I wrote that.

Rich Ehsen: But did you give him the Iron Duke one, or...

George Skelton: No, no.

Rich Ehsen: Someone else did that, okay.

George Skelton: His campaign staff gave him Iron Duke. In 1982 when he ran for governor, he became the Iron Duke.

Rich Ehsen: Okay, so you had some influence on the front end, but not on the back end, okay.

George Skelton: On the dull part, yeah.

Rich Ehsen: You, though, did once make a little bit of fun of him for trying to convince the Japanese to buy California rice. And it seems to me that worked out pretty well for him. Do you remember about that?

George Skelton: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I quoted, I think it was a Japanese foreign minister. He was on a trip to Japan, and I and several members of the press went with him. And he went every place talking about California rice, and some high-up Japanese minister said, "You gotta stop doing that. We're not going to buy his rice. We make our own rice. And he's wasting his time." So yeah, I wrote about that. That was a fun story to write about. Here's the California governor trying to sell California rice. Well, of course, he did, eventually. California wound up being a big exporter of rice to Japan, and then I wrote a column praising him for it saying that. I did a mea culpa, I believe, and said, "I was wrong." I love those stories to write, "I was wrong," because it gives me a second bite at the apple, I think.

Rich Ehsen: Have you had to write very many of those over the years?

George Skelton: No, but there's maybe three, or four, or five. It's always good to hear.

Rich Ehsen: Well, that's not bad for 30 years of writing a column. That's not bad.

George Skelton: Yeah, well, it's gotta be an interesting subject, or I won't write about it.

Rich Ehsen: Right. I want to ask you about Prop 187. Because of course, that was, not to use a cliched term, but kind of an earthquake. For those who may not remember, Prop 187 of course was a ballot measure that cut off a lot of public services to unauthorized immigrants, championed greatly by Pete Wilson. Passed handily, but was eventually overturned by the courts. A lot of folks have pontificated that it was the driving factor for turning California very deeply blue, which it is today. Every constitutional officer, super majorities in the legislature. I wanted to ask you, because my understanding is there was some tension in the *LA Times* newsroom over this, because the paper came out very vocally against Prop 187, but they also endorsed Wilson for governor. Now, what's your perspective on that?

George Skelton: Well, I wasn't in the newsroom then. I was in Sacramento and...

Rich Ehsen: But even here, did you see that kind of...

George Skelton: I don't think anybody here cared about it. If they did, they didn't speak up about it. I didn't care about it. I didn't. Number one, I may read the editorials but they don't affect my feeling about anything, or what I write, certainly. I may read and say, "Well, they got that right," or, "They got that wrong," but I didn't care about it. I'm sure they endorsed Wilson for many reasons, not for 187, but there were probably staffers who were very much against 187. They didn't like Wilson because they felt he built his campaign on 187 and maybe he did. Yeah, he probably did.

Rich Ehsen: Well, let me follow up on that because you did write just a few years ago that approval by voters of 187 was, and I quote, "a high water mark" for the California GOP. And it has been quoted, "sinking into oblivion ever since, but not entirely because of the anti-illegal immigration measure." And you said blaming it solely on that, and by "that" you meant 187, is "simplistic." Why do you think that?

George Skelton: When did I say that? What year was that.

Rich Ehsen: I want to say this was 20... I didn't write the year down here, I think it was 2016 or 2017.

George Skelton: Oh, okay.

Rich Ehsen: It was recently, in the last four or five years.

George Skelton: Yeah, well yeah, sure. There were other things. They went against California sentiment on abortion, on gun control, on most all the social issues. On the environment, California Strong and all that stuff. Yeah, I do believe that 187 was a turning point, and that was a high water mark, I do believe that.

Rich Ehsen: Just not the only one?

George Skelton: Not the only one, but that, combined with the demographic change, and the demographic change is what really changed the complexion of California politics. More people of color, Latinos and Asians. The Republican Party didn't give them anything to be for, to be attracted to. The Republican Party, didn't give them any reason to be Republicans, and they became Democrats or Independents. And white people are still pretty much divided.

Rich Ehsen: Well, I'm always curious about that too, because 187 certainly... I agree with you, there are many, many things. But it seemed like it was aimed at a demographic that we hear all the time would be a much more natural constituency for the Republicans. And yet it seems like it pushed them away and at a pretty healthy clip that they've never recovered from.

George Skelton: Well, the Democratic Party did a brilliant job of demonizing Pete Wilson on it. Democrats have always been better political professionals than Republicans. Republicans are more business oriented, private enterprise. Not that there aren't some brilliant Republican strategists, there certainly are, Stu Spencer, Rob Stutzman right now, Mike Murphy. But Democrats had more and there are more Democratic volunteers and activists, and they put together better machinery in this state than the Republicans do. And they were able to gang up on Pete Wilson and make him the bad guy and to me, that was a big factor.

Rich Ehsen: Well, speaking of political machines, let's talk about a machine from the future in the Terminator. [chuckle] Because recall campaigns, every governor has faced them, most of them have faced dozens of them, and most of them go nowhere until 2003, when we had a combination of a very unlikable incumbent and a bad economy. And then out of this collection of goofballs and opportunists that ran, there's also one very magnetic global superstar in Arnold Schwarzenegger. You once said in 2003, "that Davis lacks long range vision, core convictions, and people skills. That he thought small, had no ideology other than getting re-elected and was insensitive and rude." Has anything changed your opinion on him over the years?

George Skelton: No. I always liked the guy personally. I was his golf partner one time in a press-legislature golf tournament back when we had those things. And we finished second. No, we tied for first, but drew straws and we got the second prize. But anyway, I've always found him very pleasant myself. But he was risk-averse and he couldn't make a hard decision on things. And he was too concerned about his constituents and his money people. He had good ideas, but sometimes he didn't have the guts to carry them out. He did do a good job on education his first year, probably the best of really any governor. He had some good reform ideas with Gary Hart as his education advisor. But he got caught up with the energy crisis, and that more than the budget deficit is what caused his recall. He was ganged up on by what I called the power pirates from Texas who took over, who bought up California's power plants and controlled them and kept California from getting power, and raised the price of it. He didn't know what to do about it. And we only had a certain amount of control. The Federal Energy Commission, had more control, and that was under control of George Bush and Dick Cheney, and they were ganging up on California. So there's not much he could do about it. I thought, and some of his advisors thought, "You should send in The National Guard and take over a power

plant as a big gesture of power,” but he refused to do that. So that’s what that did it in the end for him.

Rich Ehsen: Right.

George Skelton: Plus he didn’t have a strong personality for most people.

Rich Ehsen: I’ve heard him described at one time as the most aptly-named Governor we’ve ever had, Gray.

George Skelton: [chuckle] Yeah.

Rich Ehsen: And of course, he’s followed by a megawatt superstar Arnold Schwarzenegger. By that time I was covering the Capitol as well, on a regular basis. And I want you to correct me if you disagree with my perception here. My perception of Arnold when he came in was that he was politically savvy, but he wasn’t politically sharp. And by that I mean, he’d been around politics for a long time, so he certainly knew politics, but he didn’t seem...He had a lot of the CEO mentality, “I say jump and you ask how high.” And it took him a couple of years to figure out that, “Oh, by the way, the legislature is a co-equal branch of government.” Maybe I’m overstating it. What was your perspective on Arnold, from the beginning to the end? What do you think of how, maybe he evolved over his time, which was about six years in office?

George Skelton: Well, my perspective is pretty much like yours, but I think... Just sitting here thinking about it, [chuckle] frankly, he and Reagan had something similar. They were both in the movies, and they believed their scripts. Reagan believed his scripts. He would often tell stories about things he considered real, but they really were right out of scripts. They were fictitious. We’d write about it, and he’d still tell the story. Like some guy in World War II going down with his bomber over Europe after having everybody bail out, and he went down with some wounded guy with him. Well, it never happened. It was in a movie. So Schwarzenegger may have well been the same way. He believed he was the Terminator all the time. And whatever he wanted to do, he could do. He was all powerful. And, you’re right, he was a CEO but he didn’t quite grasp the balance of power system. He didn’t grow up with it, after all. He grew up in Austria. He wasn’t immersed in American politics, even though he was married to a Kennedy. But my impression is the same. He was a good politician, he certainly knew how to get votes. I’ve always said, “Never underestimate the desire of the American public to be entertained.” And, they’ll elect an entertainer every time, if he shows any kind of a semblance of being able to govern. But he just didn’t know what was going on in Sacramento. He brought in some good people, Bill Hauck...

Rich Ehsen: Susan Kennedy.

George Skelton: Allan Zaremborg. Those people advised him how to operate, and he just ignored them. And so he fell on his face the first four or five years. Then he became better, and he finally agreed to a tax increase, 2009. But they wrote a sloppy bill that required a voter vote on it, and the voters rejected half the tax increase. But, yeah, he got wiser. He was good on climate change.

Rich Ehsen: We talked a little bit about Willie Brown earlier. So I want to ask you a specific question about him, because I think Willie Brown is also one of these titanic figures in California's late political history. The self-described Ayatollah of the Assembly, and the person even Willie acknowledges was probably the driving force behind us having term limits today, even though they're different than what the voters passed. But at one point, you wrote about his dominance of the legislature, and again, I'm going to quote here: "I've always felt there was also another reason why Brown became the term limits poster boy, a smidgen of racism. He was not humble and subdued. This African-American was flamboyant, wore stylish suits, drove fancy cars, and could be blatantly partisan." How much has changed on that front, do you think? Do you still think that way, that a lot of the issue with Willie was over race and?

George Skelton: Well, I'm sure. I think I wrote it well there. I certainly think that that he was a quote "uppity" Black guy to a lot of people. Unlike Tom Bradley, who was pretty smooth. Obama, same thing. But not Willie. Willie came in with a Nehru suit, back in the days when people wore Nehru suits, and flashy clothes, flashy sports cars, I don't know, Porsches. He gave me a ride one time in his Porsche across the Bay Bridge. I was covering McGovern in 1972, and I saw Willie at a rally and I said, "I'm going to miss that plane." I was working for UPI then and I had to file dictating a story. And Willie was there, and I said, "God, how do you get to the Oakland Airport?" "You need a ride?" "Yeah." So he gave me a ride. God, we must have gone 110 miles an hour across the Bay Bridge.

Rich Ehsen: Across the Bay Bridge.

George Skelton: Oh yes.

Rich Ehsen: In his Porsche.

George Skelton: We're weaving in and out of everything, and he was laughing the whole time. Anyway, that was Willie.

Rich Ehsen: Was that a little intentional, you think? He's like, "George, you better write something nice about me or..."

George Skelton: No, no, no, no, no. Willie's just...That was him. He loved that. He loved to be in the fast lane all the way. And the public just didn't like that. They considered him a flamboyant Black guy, and they didn't like him. White guys didn't like him. A lot of white people didn't like him. And he knew it. He knew that very well. He told me once that's why he never ran for statewide office. He knew he could never get elected outside of San Francisco, so he would never think about running for governor.

Rich Ehsen: Right.

George Skelton: Bob Moretti once told me that. Bob Moretti, [Assembly] Speaker in the '70s, Democratic, a very good Speaker. At the 1972 Democratic Convention in Miami, there was a big fight between Humphrey's delegation and the McGovern delegation. Willie was the chairman of

the McGovern delegation, and California was split on that. So Willie got up, made this rousing speech to the delegation. "Give me back my delegation," with emphasis on "*my*...Give me back *my* delegation." And Moretti said he just winced because he knew that white folks in California weren't going to like that "my delegation" thing. And so that's the kind of thing Willie faced, and he knew it but he didn't care. Willie was Willie. He was going to be Willie all the way. Really brilliant, brilliant at power. He knew how to get power and hold on to it.

Rich Ehsen: How was he, from a press perspective, because Willie was one of those classic 'turning the knobs' guys, right. How was he with the press? Did you ever feel like he was trying to coerce you into doing things a certain way? Did you have to...

George Skelton: Coerce?

Rich Ehsen: Coerce or to...

George Skelton: Not coerce.

Rich Ehsen: Okay.

George Skelton: Every politician tries to spin you. Even Reagan, a true believer, he's not really spinning you, he's trying to *educate* you. If you could just understand what he knows, you'd be on his side. Well, that was him. Other politicians, most of them are giving you talking points. That's become increasingly so over the years, talking points and not true beliefs. But Willie...Willie, he's kind of a bullshitter, sure. But you can see that. Part of this job is reading the bullshit. You gotta have a big bullshit filter to be a reporter.

Rich Ehsen: Agreed. I want to ask you one question about somebody who definitely was pretty plain spoken, BT Collins. Certainly one of the more interesting figures, I'm sure you've probably covered. What do you remember about BT?

George Skelton: Completely candid, he would always say what he felt. I didn't know him that well. I'm not a psychologist, but I would think he had a big monkey on his shoulder about his very severe wounds in Vietnam. That was a cross to bear, and might have been slightly bitter about that, particularly toward people who were against the war. I don't think he ever got over being pro Vietnam War. Interesting guy, candid guy. That was one great appointment of Jerry Brown in his first two terms. He made BT his chief of staff and BT would tell him exactly what he needed to hear. Whether Jerry paid any attention to it, I don't know. In fact, one famous thing, we quoted him on it and he hated us for quoting him, but he told Jerry that he had greasy hair and he should shampoo it once in a while.

Rich Ehsen: BT Collins might be one of the only people who would've ever been able to tell Jerry Brown something like that.

George Skelton: Yeah. Right. I decided to do an interview with BT. I interviewed him, and then I was back in the office writing about it and I was into the first paragraph when word reached me that he just had a heart attack.

Rich Ehsen: Oh, yeah.

George Skelton: And then he died. He died before I could finish the column. And so that was... Talk about hard columns to write. That one was.

Rich Ehsen: Oh, yeah. I want to step back just one bit, because, something I should have asked you when we were talking about Willy. You noted he said he would never have run for statewide office because he knows he wouldn't have won. California has yet to have a person of color as governor. We have not had a woman. We are generally seen as this liberal bastion, certainly in points east of here. They all think we're the liberal bastion and yet, I can name a lot of conservative states that have had female governors, Black governors, etc. We never have. Now we've had candidates. You mentioned Tom Bradley, who lost one very close race. Larry Elder, who was really never in this race on the recall last year, which is kind of an off shoot thing, not really in the real race in a lot of ways. What do you think? I mean, it seems like we have a lot of really qualified women lining up now to that have expressed their interest in running for governor: Betty Yee, Fiona Ma, maybe Tony Atkins, others. What are your perspectives in that area? Do you think that this is something you might see before you're done?

George Skelton: Oh yeah, yeah. Sure. Tom Bradley did not run a good race and he almost won. He came within fraction of percentage point, I believe, from winning. I'm not sure what it was, but it was very, very, very, very close. But he took the Black vote for granted. And the Black vote didn't necessarily turn out as great as he thought it would. He supported a proposition to ban handguns, a handgun ban. Well, that was ridiculous. I mean, that thing lost. And Deukmejian was able to rally the gun owners at the last minute to win that thing. That said, I think there was probably some racial prejudice there that cost him. But he could have won it with a better campaign, let's put it that way.

Kathleen Brown was going against Pete Wilson in his second term, and he was a big Republican here nationally and in California. I mean, '94 was a year that the Republicans took over the assembly. And Pete won re-election running on 187 and Kathleen Brown couldn't even really say why she was against capital punishment. All she could say was her father was, and she didn't run a real sharp campaign running against an incumbent. Meg Whitman running against Jerry Brown, a legend. Everybody liked Jerry. He was attorney general. Meg Whitman had never run for office before. In fact, she had a terrible voting record, hadn't even voted. And so she didn't win. So better women candidates I think could have won. I certainly don't think there's anything here anti female.

Rich Ehsen: Yeah. Like my colleague Lou Cannon always says, candidates matter.

George Skelton: You're right.

Rich Ehsen: They really matter. I've asked you a lot about all these experiences and a lot of the folks you've covered. I want to ask you one more before I just turn to a few things about writing the column itself and that's our current governor Gavin Newsom. Now, he's had some of the best economic conditions that a governor could ever ask for. Unexpected in many ways. We all

thought maybe the pandemic was going to wipe out the budget, but instead it gave us a huge surplus. You've covered nine governorships over all these years. How does Gavin stack up right now? Maybe the better question is what do you think he could learn from his predecessors? [chuckle] Maybe that he hasn't seemed to pick up yet? What do you think he could be learning from these governors that maybe he doesn't know?

George Skelton: He should focus more on three or four things he wants to get done. It seems to me like he's pretty scatter gun. He's more concerned about being the first nationally to do something than doing something right. And I think he doesn't follow through. The employment development department scandal is ridiculous. It's gone on for a couple of years. He's put a couple of people in there. He just should just focus and listen. He doesn't listen to people, I understand. I've given him B-minuses when I graded him. And I think that's where he is. It's incomplete, but he should think less about what's going to happen to him and his record and more about the state. That's easy to say, but he shouldn't be so interested in being first and focus more on making California better. Like homelessness. Come on, gotta do something about that. He spent a whole State of the State address talking about homelessness, and it's just as bad now as it's ever been.

Rich Ehsen: He's thrown a lot of money at it.

George Skelton: Yeah, I know. So what? Just thrown a lot of money at it, and where's it gone?

Rich Ehsen: That's the problem. When you take on a problem, it becomes yours, whether, you created it or not.

George Skelton: Right.

Rich Ehsen: It seems like that's a big part of his issue now. He took on a very intractable problem. And as you said, it's not easy to solve that.

George Skelton: Right, he's gotta get people off the street. Period.

Rich Ehsen: We'll see what the L.A. mayor's race does, if it has an impact on him because that's...

George Skelton: Yeah, right.

END OF PART II