

**THE
SECRET
BOSS
OF
CALIFORNIA**

**The Life and High Times
of Art Samish**

**by ARTHUR H. SAMISH
and BOB THOMAS**

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To Merced, Carolyn, and Jo Anne, with love

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CHAPTER 1

Reflections in the Window of Suite 916 of the Kohl Building, San Francisco 94104

I'VE NEVER GROWN TIRED OF THE VIEW, NOT IN THE YEARS I HAVE occupied this office. How could I, when I can gaze down at the fairest city of them all and see so many things that bring back memories?

Over there on Telegraph Hill I can see Coit Tower poking up through the late-afternoon fog. Mrs. Coit had the tower built to honor the brave men who fought the Fire of 1906. I was here then, though I was just a boy, a mere boy.

That big beauty of a building down the street is the new headquarters of the Bank of America. Whenever I see it, I think of old A. P. Giannini, who built that bank into the biggest in the world. Old A.P., bless his Italian heart, loaned me the money so I could make my first million-dollar deal. He and I were great pals. I used to meet him coming around the corner on Montgomery Street and we'd stand and talk for hours while the cable cars clanged up and down California Street.

Looking out the window I can see a dozen billboards. Now they're advertising beers and breads and bottomless bars, but once I had them plastered with the photograph of Elmer Rob-

inson. I got him elected mayor, too. I did it out of friendship because I didn't give a damn who was elected mayor of San Francisco. Or United States senator, either. The only ones I cared about were the senators and assemblymen of the legislature, those darling boys who made the laws that affected my clients.

Around the corner down there on Sacramento Street is Jack's, where I've enjoyed hundreds of fine meals—you can guess by my size that I'm a fellow who likes his vittles. Jack's has been in business over a century, and it seems as if Louie Lurie has been eating lunch there that long. Louie owns this building I'm in and a flock of others in the neighborhood, and he and I go back many years. Just today I saw him at his usual table in Jack's and he told me: "It's been fifty-two years, Artie. The first time was in the Palace Court of the Palace Hotel in 1918, when we got together with Harry Chandler of the *L.A. Times* and Joe Knowland of the *Oakland Tribune* to figure how we could get Sam Shortridge elected United States senator."

So many memories.

Then as I look around this office I can bring forth a flood of memories, too. On the wall facing my desk are bound volumes of laws passed by the California state legislature over thirty years. Many of those laws I wrote, or had written for me. Even though I never held office.

But I knew those who did. *I'll say* I knew them. Knew some of them better than they knew themselves. Locked in the big safe in my outer office are the black books I kept on every senator and assemblyman. My staff and I found out everything there was to know about the lawmakers, and I mean everything. It all went into those black books. Come election time, they could prove mighty handy.

In that outer room you'll find photographs of my staff at office parties. We had a lot of parties, because that's the way I think life should be. I had a big staff in those years—my office occupied two floors in this building and the penthouse as well.

Now they're all gone, and it's quiet here. Too damned quiet.

On the wall of my office you can see two oil paintings of clowns. It's no secret that I love clowns. Some of my critics claimed that I was a clown myself. I don't deny it. Clowns are lucky people. They can hide behind their funny masks and enjoy themselves by making other people laugh.

My credo was always: Raise hell and have fun. That's why I'm writing this book.

I thought about it for a long time. Years ago Gene Fowler said he wanted to write my story. Later, Eugene Burdick wanted to do the same thing. But I held off, and by the time I made up my mind both Fowler and Burdick were dead. So I decided to tell my story to Bob Thomas. Like me, he's a native Californian and he knows the state. And didn't he write a pretty good book about another rogue, Harry Cohn?

The reader might ask why I am finally telling my life story. It's because my life has been quiet for too long. I feel like raising hell and having fun one more time.

CHAPTER 2

In Which I Make an Immodest Reply to the Reader's Question: Who the Hell Is Arthur H. Samish?

YOU WOULDN'T NEED TO ASK THAT QUESTION IF YOU HAD LIVED IN California during the 1940s or 1950s. Or elsewhere, for that matter. During that time I became quite a famous character—some said infamous. I won't argue the point.

I never ran around getting publicity for myself; in my business it was usually better not to have any. But newspaper guys were my pals, my buddies, and if they asked me something, I'd give them an answer. A good answer.

One time a reporter asked me how I was getting along with the governor. "I am the governor of the legislature," I told him. "To hell with the governor of California." *That* gave the reporter something to write about.

My habit of talking turkey with reporters brought me into the national picture in 1949. First there was an article in *The Nation* by a nice fellow named Carey McWilliams. He called it "The Guy Who Gets Things Done," and he wrote: "It would be extremely difficult to find, in the entire range of American politics, a more extraordinary political virtuoso than Artie Samish." You've got to like a man who writes like that.

McWilliams added: "Although Samish is known to everyone in California who is directly interested in politics, I would venture to guess that not one per cent of the voters could identify his name although he is, beyond all doubt, the political boss of the state."

After discussing my multifarious activities, McWilliams remarked: "From 1931 to the present time Samish has controlled a large bloc of votes in the state legislature. Control of this bloc is tantamount to control of the legislature, as this bloc usually elects the speaker of the Assembly, who appoints the committees. Majority control of two or three key committees carries with it, of course, the power to kill in committee or send out with a 'do-pass' recommendation most important pieces of legislation."

"The Guy Who Gets Things Done" created a stir, but it was nothing compared to the articles in *Collier's* magazine in August of 1949. They were written by an astute gentleman named Lester Velie. His title was, "The Secret Boss of California." I borrowed the title for this book. I hope he doesn't mind.

Velie began his articles by quoting from a University of California professor who was lecturing his senior class in political science:

"It says in the book that we elect a legislature in California to make our laws for us. It says the legislature is responsible to the people. It also says that we elect delegates to political conventions, that we elect attorney generals and mayors and district attorneys.

"Well, let's see. . . . There's a man in California today who holds no public office and is responsible only to the interests who hire him. Yet this man can push laws through the legislature or stop them cold. He named our attorney general. He elected the mayor of San Francisco and he told him whom to name for police commissioner. He has the power to make or break governors.

"The man once delivered California's delegates to a Presidential candidate—Wendell Willkie. He is the most powerful nonofficeholder in California. Who is this man?"

None of the professor's students could answer. But Lester Velie did:

The man who "controls the state of California" falls into no easy identifying niche. He is neither labor boss, oil king, press lord, financial nabob, nor rabble rouser of the Huey Long type. You can't even neatly tag him as the Boss Pendergast or Crump or Hague of California. Not for Artie Samish are the mildewed methods of these political Neanderthals. He is *sui generis*—the only one of his kind. An original, both as a human being and a political operator. He is a political boss without a party.

Velie got a lot of quotables out of me. I told him I had "the damndest Gestapo you ever saw," which was the truth, and that "I can tell if a man wants a baked potato, a girl, or money," which was also true.

I not only supplied Mr. Velie with quotes; I gave him a prize picture as well. When his photographer was taking some shots of me, I told him: "You want the real picture? I'll give you something that tells the whole story."

Then I produced a little ventriloquist's dummy, a cheerful hobo with white gloves and top hat. I planted the dummy in front of me and said, "That's the way I lobby. That's my legislature. That's Mr. Legislature. 'How are you today, Mr. Legislature?'"

I had another thought, "If you can get a long enough ladder and put it against the Capitol dome, you can get a picture of me unscrewing the gold cupola."

I gave that eastern fellow something to write about. Strangely enough, the best quote of the articles didn't come

from me, but from Governor Earl Warren himself. Velie had a meeting with the governor, and he asked, "Who has more influence with the legislature, you or Artie Samish?"

Said the governor, "On matters that affect his clients, Artie unquestionably has more power than the governor."

You never saw such a whoop-de-do as followed those articles in *Collier's*. The whole state of California and part of the nation seemed to be up in arms about Artie Samish. You can read almost any political history of California and it will tell you that the Velie stories were the beginning of the end of political power for Art Samish.

Don't you think that I knew that? Why do you think that I talked so openly to Lester Velie?

My good friend Carl Greenberg, the astute political reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, thinks that I had a kind of political death wish when I talked to Velie. That's a highfalutin analysis, but Carl might have a point there.

Why did I do it? Maybe I was looking for a way out. Maybe the fun had gone out of being "the secret boss of California." Maybe I just didn't have the heart for it any more. You must remember this: my mother had died about a year before. She meant everything to me, and she still does; I think of her every morning and evening of my life. The driving ambition that I had was to make sure that she was well taken care of, to repay her for the devotion she had shown to me. When she passed on, a lot of my ambition died with her.

The end of my career didn't come exactly as I had planned. After the *Collier's* articles, I continued in business as usual. I knew I could ride out the storm—I had always done so before. I had been through grand jury quizzes and special investigations and every other damn thing, but nothing had ever touched me. I was clean.

There was a lot of blah-blah-blah about what a bad guy Artie Samish was, but I went on, just as before. I didn't lose any clients, and I didn't lose any power in the legislature. I

could still call the shots the way I wanted. Everything remained the same as the good governor had stated: "On matters that affect his clients, Artie unquestionably has more power than the governor."

I felt sorry for Earl Warren. He had taken a great deal of abuse because of the Velie articles. One of his pet projects was the establishment of a Crime Commission, and I saw to it that the proposal got through the legislature. That was my first mistake.

If the governor wanted to play around with a Crime Commission, that was all right with me; it was none of my affair. But then he appointed Warren Olney III as its chief counsel.

Warren Olney III. I had good reason to be sentimental about that name; it was in the law firm of his father that I got my start in politics. Naturally I felt no trepidation when I was asked to appear before closed hearings of the Crime Commission one Sunday at the University of California in Berkeley. All of my books and affairs were in order, I believed, and I was willing to help Olney in any way I could—within reason.

"Mr. Olney just wants to ask you one question," said his deputy.

That sounded easy. So I went over to Berkeley on that Sunday, and I was surprised at what Olney wanted to ask me.

"Do you know whether Bill Cody is a bookmaker?" he demanded. Bookmaking, of course, was illegal in California.

I didn't like the question. Of course I knew that Bill Cody had been a bookmaker in San Francisco, and so did Olney. But he wasn't a bookmaker *then*. Poor Bill was dying of leukemia, and I wasn't going to let Warren Olney make me say something that would cause Bill further grief.

"Mr. Cody is a very fine gentleman with a very fine family," I replied.

Warren Olney III became stiff and insistent. "All we want to know is whether Bill Cody is a bookmaker," he said.

"Mr. Cody is a very fine gentleman with a very fine family," I repeated.

Olney was becoming red in the face, and a recess was called in the hearing. I took a stroll outside and I ran into a member of the commission. "Keep going—you're doing fine," he said to me.

When the session resumed, Olney wouldn't let up. "I'm asking you if you know whether Bill Cody is a bookmaker," he said once more.

Again I replied, "Mr. Cody is a very fine gentleman with a very fine family." Then I pointed two fingers at Olney and told him, "And don't you try to put words in my mouth."

Olney never forgave me. Later Dwight Eisenhower was elected President, and he appointed Earl Warren chief justice. Warren's man Olney was named assistant United States attorney in San Francisco. Coincidentally, the Internal Revenue agents came to visit me. I had nothing to hide, and I showed them everything. They spent months and months searching for something to nail me with. Finally they found it.

The way I figure it, that little finger-pointing at Olney cost me a million dollars in lawyers' fees, fines, and tax settlements. It also cost me twenty-six months at McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary in Washington State. But you know something? I had fun there, too. I also raised some hell. I didn't care whether I got out of that place or stayed. I called it the Isle of Dreams.

CHAPTER 3

A Smattering of Information about My Early Life, as Much as I Can Remember; Also, My Introduction to Politics

YOU CAN UNCOVER ALL KINDS OF OPINIONS ABOUT ARTHUR H. Samish. You take the late Senator Estes Kefauver. I had some nice chats with him and his Crime Commission when they came to California in 1951. The senator from Tennessee said about me: "He is a combination of Falstaff, Little Boy Blue and Machiavelli, crossed with an eel."

That fine writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Stanton Delaplane, once wrote that I was a sort of Sidney Greenstreet character.

I've been described in all kinds of ways. A fellow named Elmer Ritter Rusco wrote 523 pages about me for his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of California at Berkeley. He called it *Machine Politics, California Model: Arthur H. Samish and the Alcoholic Beverage Industry*. Imagine writing all that about Artie Samish!

Despite all the words that have been written and said about me, the real story has never been told. Until now. So now I'll begin, and I'll start at the beginning.

I was born on August 9, 1897, in the Boyle Heights section

of East Los Angeles. My mother had been born in Los Angeles. My father was a china decorator and a native of Austria. How he managed to come to the United States and to Los Angeles, I have no idea. I never learned much about him. I remember him only as a tall, good-looking man.

When I was three or four years old, my parents moved to San Francisco. It was some time later that my father disappeared. He just walked out one day and never came back. That's why I don't know much about him.

So there was my mother, left with a small son to support. She was a fine, gentle woman who devoted her life to me. Is it any wonder that I revere her memory? She is my religion, and to this day I feel that she has never left me. When I started in business, I adopted the name of Arthur H. Samish. Many people wondered what the middle initial stood for. I took it from my mother's name, Henrietta.

My mother and my grandmother and I were living in a house on Eddy Street between Polk and Van Ness when the big earthquake struck on April 18, 1906. It was something terrible. I can remember the Mechanics' Pavilion burning down, and I still can recall how the old City Hall was knocked down in an attempt to stop the fire. We lived in the last block to burn in the face of the fire, and, like a quarter million other people, we were without a home.

The only place we could find to stay was out in the Richmond district at Sixth and Clement. There was a relief station on the corner where we lived, and I would load food onto my coaster and carry it around to the neighbors. That was the only food they could get.

We settled on Clement Street for a while, and I did what I could to help out. Every Sunday morning I arose at three and rode the streetcar all the way down to the Ferry Building. I had an apple box with some wheels on it, and I pushed it the few blocks to the Examiner Building, where I picked up the Sunday papers. Then I rode the streetcar back out to Clement

Street and sold the *Examiner*. On a good Sunday I could earn a couple of bucks.

Our next home was at Fillmore and A Street, where we stayed a few years. Then we lived at Divisadero and Post, then on Hayes Street near Fillmore. I was in and out of grammar schools all over town. Mostly out. I was a hell raiser even then—I liked playing handball and having fun instead of studying. As a result, my grades were pretty poor, and I was always in trouble with the teachers.

Mostly, I was looking for excitement, and schoolwork wasn't very exciting. I can remember the thrill I felt when I saw Jack Johnson, the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. He was training in San Francisco for his fight with Al Kaufman in 1909, and every afternoon he drove past the Fremont Grammar School in his fancy automobile. He stopped and talked with us kids, and all of us marveled at his dude clothes and his flashing jewelry. Jack Johnson made quite an impression on young Art Samish.

My mother was running a boardinghouse, and that barely kept us going. Besides selling newspapers, I ran errands after school for the Riverdale Creamery and worked at other odd jobs. But that wasn't enough; I had to contribute more to the support of our small family. So I quit school in the seventh grade and never went back. I don't think my teachers shed any tears.

Later in my career, I found myself dealing most of the time with men who had university educations and law degrees. Not only dealing with them, but trying to keep two steps ahead of them. Me, Art Samish, who never finished the seventh grade. Do I regret not getting more education? Hell, no. I learned fast out in the world of business and politics. I taught myself to type, and I became pretty good at figures. Damn good, in fact. No, I have no regrets. I managed to outsmart a lot of guys who spent half their lives in school.

After I left school, I delivered milk for the creamery,

clerked in a grocery store, ran errands, did anything to help support my mother. My first real opportunity in the world of business came when I was hired as office boy in the fine law firm of Page, McCutcheon, Knight and Olney in 1913. Do you recognize the name Olney? Yes, that was the father of the Warren Olney III who helped prosecute me into the Isle of Dreams. Curious, isn't it, that the man who helped give me my start would have a son who wanted to ruin me?

I was pleased to be even a small part of the firm of Page, McCutcheon, Knight and Olney. They had a big office in the Merchants Exchange Building, and all of the lawyers were fine, upstanding men. I kept my eyes and ears open, trying to learn lessons so I could be as successful as they were. One of my best lessons came from a partner named H. L. Atkinson. I had been offered a job in another office but I turned it down, partly because I wanted to stay with Page, McCutcheon, Knight and Olney but also because I was expected to work from seven thirty in the morning until six at night. Mr. Atkinson wrote me a letter which I have kept all these years. He told me:

. . . You must not shy at good jobs like that because they look hard—it is a confession of weakness unworthy of a strong, capable man. Say to yourself, "I can do anything that anyone else can do," and then do whatever comes to your hand, and do it a little better than the average. Think over it, study over it, and put your best effort into it, all the time.

And don't let a little thing like long hours stop you. Everybody that gets anywhere has to work long hours. I am myself working longer hours than that, by choice. After working nine hours a day here, I study three more hours at night, and all day Sunday, only allowing myself two hours off on Saturday afternoon, and one Sunday a month. The really hard work is to get the job, and that is already done.

You must remember, Arthur, that there is any quantity of incompetent men, and only a few competent ones, comparatively speaking. The incompetent ones are looking for the soft snaps; lazy men; men afraid of an honest day's work.

Don't get into that class; those are the boys who never get anywhere. The boy who gets there is the boy who is not afraid, who tackles the hardest-looking jobs, and conquers them, and makes them easy to him. Then he is in the position to show the other fellow how to do it—to boss the job.

This period of hard work is only a stage of your existence, a part of your education. Go to it cheerfully. Be glad that it is hard, because it is only by the hard things that we develop.

If your mother is not very well, don't bother her about getting your breakfast. Get your own breakfast. I have done it for years—so do fully nine-tenths of the married men I know. You may want to get married some day; get used to it.

Now Arthur, you are a strong, capable kid; but your strength and ability are of no use to you unless you use them. And the more you use them, the more they develop. And don't think that it is all grind while you are developing; there are compensations along the way. You have felt the pleasure of doing things for people you like. There is a greater pleasure in doing things for the sake of the things themselves, a joy over a good job well done that can only be felt by the man who has done it.

Go get it, kid, and good luck to you.

You can imagine the impression that letter made on a sixteen-year-old boy who was just getting his feet wet in business. I was more than ever determined to succeed, and I was willing to work as hard as was necessary to do so.

But of course it wasn't all work and no play in the life of young Art Samish. I had discovered I liked girls and was gratified to learn that they liked me. I cut a pretty dashing figure, if I do say so myself. I was pushing up to six feet two, and I had a strong, athletic build. And I loved to dance.

San Francisco had a lot of social clubs during those times, and I joined one called the Kotycks Club. It had its own clubhouse—I remember helping to install the wood inlay that spelled out Kotycks on the dance floor. Every weekend the club held dances, and I had a marvelous time waltzing and foxtrotting around the floor with the girls in their starched linen dresses. I also enjoyed meeting other young San Francisco men.

One of the club members I became acquainted with was Edward F. Bryant, tax collector of the City and County of San Francisco. He was a fun-loving fellow, and he and I would collect the dimes and buy beer for the Sunday night dances.

"Where are you working now?" he asked me one night.

"I'm at Fireman's Fund Insurance, working for Charley Page," I told him.

"Why don't you come and work for me in the collector's office?" he said.

I accepted his offer, and it was another important step in my career: my introduction to politics.

I loved it from the start. I enjoyed hanging around the politicians' offices and listening to them try to outfox each other. I had two great teachers in those days: Eddie Bryant, the tax collector, and Tom Finn, who was sheriff. Between the two of them, they ran San Francisco politics. Every man who wanted to run for elective office had to clear through them. And they were fair men, Eddie and Tom. Everything was aboveboard and honest. Of course, politics is politics, and always has been; certainly there were favors passed out for those who were loyal. But it was all perfectly within the law.

I felt at home in this new world I had entered. I believed that if I applied the lessons that Mr. Atkinson had told me, my

hard work and earnest effort would bring me success in the business of politics.

In later years, I never forgot that advice. And I never forgot my own humble beginnings. One night in Los Angeles, after I had achieved affluence and success, I felt the urge to return to the house where I was born. I drove over to Boyle Heights and after much searching, I found the right address on Michigan Avenue.

It was a modest little bungalow, timeworn but reflecting the care and pride of its occupants. I went to the door and was greeted by a broad-faced Mexican man. At first he was suspicious. But when I told him I only wanted to see the house where I was born, he allowed me to enter. He had a wife and an assortment of kids and they stared at me as I gazed at their neat little home. My heart swelled with memories.

"Thank you very much, my good man," I said as I left. "By the way, who owns the house now?" He told me, and the following day I arranged to pay his next six months' rent.

CHAPTER 4

The Losing Battle against Prohibition; Then, My Early Acquaintance with Sacramento and the Other Important Woman of My Life

MY TENURE WITH THE TAX COLLECTOR'S OFFICE OF SAN FRANCISCO lasted three years, and they were equivalent to a graduate course in political science at any topflight university. Ed Bryant remained a close personal friend, and I was afforded an intimate view of how the politics of a city government operated.

Then it was discovered that I was under age; not being a qualified voter, I was ineligible for employment in the tax collector's office. Bryant's deputy, Maurice L. Rapheld, took me to the office of Harry Rooney, who was the head of the Knights of the Royal Arch, an association of the important retail liquor sellers of San Francisco. The organization was extremely political in nature, since the leading saloon owners and liquor retailers of the city were closely allied with politics. I indicated my eagerness to join the Knights of the Royal Arch, and I was appointed secretary-treasurer.

I served during the war and afterward, when the move toward prohibition of alcoholic beverages was sweeping through the land. Naturally, the Knights of the Royal Arch aimed to do everything they could to combat the banning of liquor, and

one of the members, Harry Keeler, was placed in charge of the California Wet Federation, which was formed to combat the Prohibition forces. When Keeler died, I was selected financial manager of the California Wet Federation, a position that provided excellent training for my future endeavors.

My chore was to direct men in soliciting funds from liquor dealers to fight Prohibition. That was a tremendous education. I was able to see large money going in and large money going out. We collected a barrel of money. But alas, the campaign was a failure. With a large percentage of the younger male population away in the war, the wave of sentiment for banning liquor prevailed, and the nation went dry.

The next move was to Sacramento, a most significant event in my young life.

I went to Sacramento with Maurice Rapheld, a good friend who was chief deputy tax collector and had a lot of connections in the state capital. He introduced me to Alexander McCabe, private secretary to Governor Hiram Johnson.

I loved that man McCabe. I love him to this day. To me, Alexander McCabe was the most accomplished and the most successful political expert in the history of California. He handled all of Hiram Johnson's campaigns for governor and later for senator, and he helped Johnson push through the most constructive, humane legislation enacted on our books.

Alexander McCabe took me under his wing and gave me an education in state politics. I couldn't have asked for a better teacher. One of my biggest thrills was observing at close hand the fight between the administration and the big business interests over the King Tax Bill. This was a proposal to increase the tax rate for major enterprises in the state, and naturally the companies were dead set against it. They used all the power they could muster to defeat the bill. But Alexander McCabe also exercised his political genius, and he was able to muster enough votes for passage.

Through McCabe and Martin Madsen, another secretary of Hiram Johnson, I got a job in the Division of Motor Vehicles at Eighth and K streets. I was living at Mrs. Vandegriff's boardinghouse on L Street, where the food was good and the price was favorable. The price had to be favorable, because I was earning \$65 a month, and sending half of it home to my mother in San Francisco.

But I still managed to have enough left over, together with some savings, to squire the girls around town. Sacramento was an enjoyable place to live in those years. It was still a pretty small town, and it still had some of the informal charm of the gold rush days. There were dances and picnics and fairs to take pretty girls to, and I did. Oh, I was a pip! I could sweet-talk the girls and glide over the dance floor like Vernon Castle.

One girl in particular caught my fancy. She was a lovely young lady named Merced Sullivan, and her father was Dan Sullivan, the state printer and three-time president of the California State Federation of Labor. She was also working in the Motor Vehicle Department, and I took her out dancing and to the ice cream parlor afterward. Being a Sullivan, she had a fiery temper. One time after I had gone out with a couple of other girls, she came running across the park and hit me over the head with her purse. Bing, bing, bing! Just like that. I thought it was funny, but she didn't. I didn't see her for a while after that.

I worked hard in the Motor Vehicle Department and became a fast operator on the adding machine. It was an interesting department to be in, since this was the beginning of automobile registration in the state.

Another interesting aspect of the department concerned gold. Many of the big companies still used gold coin for payments, and they sent their applications for vehicle licenses in envelopes that were heavy with gold. These were placed in a tin basket with three sections, and the gold coins managed to

accumulate in these baskets. And disappear. The gag we used to tell around the department was that the janitor's job was worth \$500 to \$1,000 a night.

I didn't know anything about money in those days, so I didn't know what was going on. I did notice that two department employees used to play and lose large amounts of gold coins at the cigar counters that featured the "26" game. Finally, Charles Keane, the auditor of the State Board of Control, tried to make an audit. There was so much money missing and so little chance of finding it that he simply threw up his hands in despair. So they just changed the system and started anew.

After a few months in Sacramento, I had been able to observe the political scene, and the area that interested me most was the legislature. That's where the laws were made and that's where the real power was wielded. So naturally I aimed in that direction.

I was fortunate to acquire a job as page in the assembly. I ran errands and did favors for the assemblymen, and they recognized that I was an ambitious young man eager to please. Next I was appointed assistant history clerk at five dollars a day, and then history clerk at seven dollars a day. That meant I was filing the goings-on for future history, and although I enjoyed observing the day-to-day happenings, I was eager to be more concerned with what was being done.

That opportunity came January 21, 1921, when I was appointed engrossing and enrolling clerk for the entire legislature.

That was quite a responsible position for a twenty-three-year-old fellow. Extremely responsible. The engrossing and enrolling clerk saw to it that legislation went through the proper procedures until it became law. The clerk corrected the bill after its second reading and before its final passage. If the bill was altered by the senate and sent back to the assembly, the clerk had to check every detail—spelling, punctuation, intent, etc. After passage by both houses, the clerk sent the bill to the printers, after which it was delivered to the governor for sign-

ing or veto. If it was vetoed, then the bill returned to the legislature for sustaining or overriding. When the bill was finally passed into law, the clerk delivered it to the secretary of state for filing and future reference in the archives.

I soon realized how important the engrossing and enrolling clerk could be. He had full control of any piece of legislation from its inception until it was delivered to the governor's office.

A friendly engrossing and enrolling clerk could be very useful to the governor. The clerk could help stall legislation until the last days of the session; then the governor had thirty days to sign or veto. His veto would be much more effective after the legislators had gone home.

So again I was earning valuable experience for my future career, not only with the legislature, but with the governor's office as well.

I hustled all over the capitol, getting acquainted with everyone. One of the young fellows I met was a young lawyer from Oakland named Earl Warren. He used to sit behind a desk as clerk of the assembly judiciary committee. He was an affable fellow with a pleasant smile, but nobody paid much attention to him.

After working as engrossing and enrolling clerk, I was appointed by the governor's office to the Division of Markets. This was a very important department that had been established to encourage the organization of cooperatives. Since California was primarily an agricultural state, it was important for the growers to achieve a fair price for their crops. Too much gouging by the commission men was going on.

I worked as a deputy and then I was appointed chief deputy of the fish exchange in the Division of Markets. I directed a staff of inspectors who checked on prices and made sure that the public was not being overcharged for fish by the merchants. The prices on everything from sardines to sharks were regulated. During this time I became acquainted with some of the wonderful Italian-Americans who had become fishermen in this

country; many of them became my lifelong friends. I was easy on those boys. If they came up a bit short on halibut or salmon, I wouldn't make any trouble for them. They appreciated my consideration, and our friendship proved mutually valuable in years to come.

Now I was ready to begin my life's work. While other fellows made their way through high school and the university, I earned my training in a different school. I had matriculated in the academy of practical politics. The training period was over.

At the same time, I chose my partner for life. I used my powers of persuasion to convince Merced Sullivan that I wasn't such a bad guy after all. We were married in Sacramento on August 11, 1921, and some of her friends predicted a marriage to that wild young man, Art Samish, couldn't possibly last.

Somehow it lasted. In 1971, Merced and I mark fifty years together. She deserves all the credit. When you consider the shenanigans I have been involved in over a half-century, you realize what a wonderful woman she is.

CHAPTER 5

Professor Samish Delivers a Lecture in California Political History, Then Describes His Start as a Lobbyist

CALIFORNIA IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER STATES OF OUR REPUBLIC. It has always been different, right from its Gold Rush start. Being different is something that we Californians are proud of, but it confounds and confuses and frustrates out-of-staters. As long as I can remember, Easterners have considered California an outlandish place filled with daffy people. They still think that way, even though California now has the most population and hence the most power of any state in the nation.

The trouble with those Easterners is they don't know California the way I do. California politics may seem nutty to them, but there are reasons for everything that goes on. To understand the reasons, you need a knowledge of the state's political history, and that's what I aim to give you right now.

Don't worry—this won't hurt.

Being a vigorous, pioneer state that wasn't stuck with tradition, California started out to be progressive. As early as 1866 we had the first primary election law in the country, so that candidates could be nominated by the people rather than by

conventions of politicians. In 1868 there was a state law providing an eight-hour day for public works contracts, and many other employers observed that standard.

But all of the progressive hopes of the state's founders were destroyed because of the railroad.

During the last third of the nineteenth century, big business was corrupting public life all over the country, but nowhere was that corruption so widespread as in California. The state was big and undeveloped, and the farmers and businessmen relied heavily on transportation. The Southern Pacific squeezed them dry.

For forty years, the Southern Pacific held California in its fat hand. The railroad grabbed land, charged high freight rates, controlled business, bought judges and owned the legislature. The man who became famous as wielder of the Southern Pacific's power was William F. Herrin. He was a smart lawyer who was head of the railroad's legal and political department from 1893 to 1910. He could make the legislature sit up, bark, or roll over and play dead. Mostly he worked through the Republican Party, but he didn't play favorites—he'd buy a Democrat as well. Sometimes in a campaign both the Republican and the Democrat would be Southern Pacific candidates.

Old Bill Herrin found his match in Hiram Johnson.

There was a great man, that Hiram Johnson. The greatest we've ever had in California politics. When he became governor in 1910, he took on that Southern Pacific crowd and licked them. During his administration, California enacted some of the most progressive and humanitarian statutes in the history of this land.

Look at some of the things that Hiram Johnson was able to push through: the referendum, which allowed the voters to veto acts of the legislature; the initiative, by which the people could initiate laws and constitutional amendments; the recall, with which voters could fire public officials, including judges; regulation of public utilities; railroad regulation; workmen's

compensation; wage and hours laws for women and children; woman's suffrage; nonpartisan election of city and county officials.

Hiram Johnson also put through in 1913 the cross-filing system by which a candidate could run for office on the ticket of both parties. This was to have a profound effect on California politics.

Cross-filing weakened the power of the political parties in California. What happened then? I'll let Carey McWilliams tell you: "With party discipline at a minimum, a vacuum had been created at Sacramento which had to be filled; if neither the governor nor the political party chieftains could boss the legislature, someone had to undertake this function and that someone was Artie Samish. . . ."

How did I get started on the road to such a position?

My first lobbying job came to me quite by accident in 1922. It might have been 1923—somewhere around in that time. In my wanderings around the capitol I had become acquainted with Jesse H. Steinhart, a very able and qualified attorney from San Francisco. For some years he had represented the S&H green trading stamps and the United Cigar Stores, which had their own trading coupons.

Steinhart's opponent was Frank Connolly, the lobbyist for the independent grocers of California. The independents didn't like the competition from the chain stores which gave their customers trading stamps with each purchase, and Connolly tried to get a law passed at each session of the legislature to ban trading stamps from California. Each session he was able to get the law passed, but Steinhart was able to get the governor to veto it.

I guess Steinhart had become rich enough that he didn't want to go on working for S&H and United Cigar. He seemed to think that I was an energetic and ambitious young man, and one day he asked me if I'd like to take over as lobbyist for the trading stamps.

"Sure—what the hell!" I replied. I was game to try anything.

I was just a green kid, but I leaped right in and started to learn the business. I had already gotten to know the legislators in my jobs as page, assistant history clerk, history clerk, and engrossing and enrolling clerk. But now I was in a new capacity. Now I represented the coupon industry, and I needed to protect my clients. I had to know how the legislators stood on the trading-stamp issue. So I began talking to them. I had a little Studebaker then, and I drove it all over the state to see assemblymen and senators. I also called on the chain stores and trading-stamp people, the ones who were paying my salary. I convinced them to provide funds to help the campaigns of those legislators who were favorable to their cause.

That was to be the pattern for my future career as a lobbyist. First, organize the interest group and convince the members to contribute funds for their own interests. Then, spend the money wisely to elect those who would be friendly to those interests.

The system worked with my first clients. Never again did the legislature pass a bill against the coupon industry. Poor old Frank Connolly—I gave him and his independent grocers fits. There wasn't anything they could do to stop the trading stamps after I took over.

My achievement stirred up a lot of interest in this young fellow, Art Samish. A lot of people—important people—started coming to me for help and advice. I'd give it to them. But I was still learning, myself. I kept my eyes and my ears open at all times. I wanted to find out everything there was to know about the lobbying business.

CHAPTER 6

In Which I Discuss What It's Like to Be a Lobbyist and How I Made My First Million-dollar Deal

WHAT IS LOBBYING?

I looked the word up in my *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and here's what it says:

"In the broadest sense lobbying is the attempt of individuals and groups to influence public policy while avoiding direct political responsibility. . . . A free society by definition is one in which all comers are free to voice their divergent opinions and to petition their rulers for a redress of grievances. These basic constitutional rights make lobbying both certain and, in its most desirable forms, highly visible and useful in democratic societies."

The article goes on, but that gives you the general idea. Lobbying has been going on for a long time, according to the *Encyclopaedia*, since it can be said that Moses "lobbied" the tyrant Pharaoh. So you see—my profession goes all the way back to Moses.

Certainly lobbying has been active in California since the earliest days. When the first legislature met in San Jose, away

back in 1849, they called it "The Legislature of a Thousand Drinks." It seems that the candidates for offices in the new state government set up bars in an attempt to win favor with the legislators. One of the lobbyists was a state senator named Thomas Jefferson Green, who was trying to get himself elected general of the state militia.

At the end of each session, Green hollered, "A thousand drinks for everyone!" He kept it up until his fellow senators finally elected him general.

Green's technique might have worked in 1849, but it sure as hell wouldn't have succeeded in my day. Lobbying was a great deal more subtle. You couldn't expect to buy a vote with a drink or a steak dinner, although I paid for plenty of drinks and steak dinners. But that was just being friendly, that's all.

To me, lobbying was not just a lot of backslapping and gladhanding. It was a business. I made sure it was fun, too, but primarily it was a business.

Some people didn't think lobbying was legitimate. Every few years they'd come sniffing around, expecting to find some hanky-panky. They never found any with me. I knew what the law said about criminal lobbying; it's right there in the state constitution: "Any person who seeks to influence the vote of a member of the Legislature by bribery, promise of reward, intimidation, or any other dishonest means, shall be guilty of lobbying, which is hereby declared a felony."

Bribery? Promise of reward? Intimidation?

That was for amateurs. It certainly wasn't for Art Samish. My method of delivering votes was the soul of simplicity. It was merely this:

Select and Elect.

That was all. I simply selected those men I thought would be friendly to my clients' interests. Then I saw to it that those men got elected to the legislature.

Select and Elect.

In that way I made certain that the bills I wanted for my

clients won a friendly reception in the legislature. Sometimes an assemblyman or a senator might have disappointed me. Maybe he voted the wrong way on a bill I wanted. Too bad for him. I did my best to see that he didn't return to the legislature after the next election. And most times I was successful in that endeavor.

Select and Elect.

I didn't care whether a man was a Republican or a Democrat or a Prohibitionist. I didn't care whether he voted against free love or for the boll weevil. All I cared about was how he voted on legislation affecting my clients.

That was my job. I was being paid—and as the years went by, being paid a vast amount of money—to protect the interests of my clients. And I did so to the best of my ability. Judging from the results, that ability was more than adequate.

I wasn't alone in trying to influence legislation, not by any means. Sacramento was jammed with lobbyists for every legislative session. In 1949 the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported there were 364 registered lobbyists—and probably as many more who weren't registered. Being registered merely meant that you could appear before committees.

So in 1949 there were perhaps six hundred or seven hundred lobbyists in Sacramento, all trying to sway the votes of forty senators and eighty assemblymen. When you realize that each of those lawmakers was being paid one hundred dollars a month, you can understand why some of them might be swayed.

Naturally the legislators couldn't live on twelve hundred dollars a year. All had other sources of income, and they pursued their regular professions most of the time; by law, the legislature met only every two years (in time, special sessions made the period of service much longer than the writers of the state constitution intended).

Some of the legislators augmented their income by outright bribes from some of my lobbying colleagues, and occa-

sionally they got caught at it. That was stupid, both on the part of the legislators and the lobbyists. There were other, strictly legal ways of adding to the income of the lawmakers and simultaneously making them friendly to your own organization.

Supposing the senator or assemblyman was a lawyer, as many of them were. Well, then you could see that the worthy barrister was hired on a retainer or received important cases on behalf of your clients. Or if Mr. Legislator engaged in the insurance business, you could assure him of some lucrative policies provided by your clients. It was all very simple.

Such practices were not uncommon with many of the lobbyists. Sacramento was swarming with lobbyists for every industry—oil, movies, gas, electricity, fishing, railroads, liquor, billboards, and so on. There were also lobbyists for every conceivable interest group—veterans, teachers, doctors, dentists, osteopaths, dog lovers, nudists. You can see why lobbyists were called the third house of the legislature.

In my early years in the third house, I was learning fast. My first really big break came in 1924, when Harry Regan and W. H. Pearson came to visit me. They were the owners of the Peninsula Rapid Transit Company, which operated bus service between San Francisco and San Jose.

"Art, the railroads are giving us all kinds of trouble," Harry said to me. "Do you think you can help us?"

"Well, I'd sure be willing to try," I told them.

I made a study of what their problems were. Mainly, they were getting clobbered by the Southern Pacific, which didn't like the buses competing for passenger travel. The S.P. had been pretty well discredited in Sacramento, but it was still strong in the little towns and cities where the railroad went through. These communities were convinced to place taxes on the bus lines. So a line like the Peninsula Rapid Transit might be paying taxes in Burlingame, San Mateo, Belmont, San Carlos, Redwood City, Palo Alto, and every other damn town it went through. That was a mess.

One little bus line couldn't fight the railroads. But if all the bus lines got together, they could take on the S.P. and beat it.

I started talking to other bus-line owners—O. R. Fuller, who had a fleet of white buses in his Motor Transit Company of Southern California; Tom and Howard Morgan, who ran a bunch of stretched-out Pierce Arrows out of San Francisco; Buck Travis, who owned a line from Fresno to San Francisco. And a bunch of others. I convinced them of the wisdom of my plan, and they selected Arthur H. Samish as secretary-manager of the Motor Carriers Association.

After the appointment, Dr. Samish began diagnosing the patient's problem. The bus lines had to get out from under the tax squeeze of the local communities. I was able to convince the legislature to pass into law Section 50¼ of the Public Utility Act. That made all bus operations in the state full-fledged public utilities and placed them under the full and complete jurisdiction of the Railroad Commission (later called the Public Utilities Commission).

My next move was to place an initiative proposal on the ballot to give the bus and truck industry—I was now representing the truckers, too—the right to pay 4 per cent tax in lieu of any and all other taxes. We had a fight with that one.

I tried to educate the voting public on the need for standard taxation for buses, pointing out that 1,700 small communities had no other public transportation besides buses. But the railroads wanted to crush the competition of the bus lines, and they campaigned against the initiative with propaganda and advertising. The measure was defeated by 70,000 votes.

Next time it was different.

I was going to beat the railroads at their own game. I convinced the bus owners to put up enough money for a first-class campaign. I hired a well-known cartoonist named Johnny Argens to draw a picture of a big, fat, ugly pig. Then I splashed that picture on billboards throughout the state with the slogan:

DRIVE THE HOG FROM THE ROAD!
VOTE YES ON PROPOSITION NUMBER 2

I also had millions of handbills printed with the same picture and message. During the last weeks of the campaign they were placed in automobiles in every city and town. You'll note that I always spelled out "Number"; I never used "No." 2 because the voter might get confused and think he should vote "No."

The campaign worked. Boy, did it work! Nobody likes a roadhog, and the voters flocked to the polls and passed the constitutional amendment by 700,000! This was an amendment which I had managed to get through the legislature; it taxed bus lines at the rate of 4¼ per cent and trucks at 5 per cent in lieu of any and all other taxes. Not only that. The measure also provided free license plates for the buses and trucks.

All because the voters thought they were voting against roadhogs. That had nothing to do with it. Now what son of a gun but Art Samish could have thought of something like that?

The Motor Carriers Association was naturally pleased with the results, and I was happy to remain as secretary-manager for thirty years. Not only did my association with the bus industry provide a handsome fee over those years; it also enabled me to pull off a deal that made me financially independent.

Toward the end of the 1920s, I could see a trend toward amalgamation of the bus lines into one giant firm, Greyhound. Many of the owners I had been dealing with in the Motor Carriers Association began selling their interests to Greyhound for huge amounts of money.

I said to myself, "Why don't you buy one of those lines and cash in on the bonanza?" It was a hell of an idea, but I had no money to put it over.

One day in 1929 I was sitting in my office in the Flood Building in San Francisco. I figured I'd better do something

soon or Greyhound would buy up all the bus lines. So I sent one of my assistants down to get an option to buy the Pacific Auto Stages from Floyd W. Hatchett for \$275,000. That took a lot of nerve, because I didn't have \$275,000.

But I had this idea. Pacific Auto Stages was a going concern with a fleet of buses that ran between San Francisco, Palo Alto, and San Jose, and I figured Greyhound would need it. I went first to Herbert Fleishhacker at the Anglo Bank.

Herbert was a good friend of mine. Whenever I went into his office I threw a twenty-dollar bill on his desk, and he'd bring out a set of gold dice that he had and we'd shoot for it. After we rolled for the twenty, I told him my idea about buying Pacific Auto Stages.

"Sounds good, Art," he said. "Go outside and get the money."

That scared me off. I don't know why, but I figured to myself, This Herb Fleishhacker is pretty damn smart. Too smart for me, maybe. If he gives in so easy, I'd better watch out.

I said I'd let him know, and I went to see Art Smith, who was head of Yellow Cab Company.

"I got this deal going, Art," I told him, "and I need help. If you'll help me put the deal through and help me manage the bus line, I'll cut you in on it."

Sure, kid, I'll go along with you," Art said. Why shouldn't he? He had nothing to lose.

Still I had no idea of how to swing the deal. Finally I decided, what the hell, I'll go see A.P.

I told you how A. P. Giannini and I used to meet on the street corner and talk for hours. I was just a kid, and he was a big man of finance, but he seemed to think I knew the political situation and he liked to talk to me. I went to see him and told him about my dream of buying the Pacific Auto Stages.

"I'll give you the money," he said.

I waited until the very last day of the option, and I made

a date to meet Hatchett on a street corner with my agent, Jack Goldberg. Right there on the street I handed over the money in \$10,000 bills. Eleven of them—\$110,000!

Here I was thirty-two years old and president of the Pacific Auto Stages. It was a dream come true.

I did things with that company. My competitors were my old pals, Regan and Pearson, who had brought me into the Motor Carriers Association. Their Peninsula Rapid Transit covered the same fifty-two miles of route, and we both had our own stations and ticket sellers.

I told Regan and Pearson, "For Christ's sake, let's fire some of the bastards and combine facilities. We can have one bus station instead of two and share the expense." They agreed, and we both cut costs. In addition, I owned the lease on the Fifth Street Terminal in San Francisco, and I collected 8 per cent on all tickets sold by the other bus lines.

Pretty soon I had run my profit from thirty-five cents a car mile to sixty-five cents a car mile. Then I was ready for my big move. I asked Regan and Pearson to give me an option for their Peninsula Rapid Transit Company, and I took the package to Tom Wilson at Pacific Greyhound. He bought the whole shebang for more than a million dollars.

I had held the bus line for only nine months, and I was able to clear \$290,000 with no investment of my own. But I didn't take all the money. Art Smith of Yellow Cab Company had helped me set up the deal and had advised me on how to run the bus line; then he died on January 29, 1930. Poor Art had been hard hit in the Wall Street crash of 1929, and it didn't look as if his widow Rosabel would be left with anything. Even though I had no legal obligation to do so, I decided to share the profits with her.

Twenty years later, I received a letter from W. Lansing Rothschild, who became president of Yellow Cab in San Francisco after Art's death. Rothschild said what I did was "one of the most extraordinary instances of magnanimity, unselfishness,

integrity of character, idealism and loyalty to friendship ever to come to my attention and which is rarely seen in these days. You credited half the gain, or \$145,000, to the estate of Arthur O. Smith which otherwise would have been a very meagre estate for the benefit of his widow Rosabel.

"In my long business career I cannot recall a similar situation where an individual, purely through a sense of loyalty and under no obligation of any kind, did such a splendid, generous, unpretending and unsolicited act. What you did then can never be tied."

CHAPTER 7

Governors Who Have Known Me

MY EXPERIENCE WITH GOVERNORS OF THE GREAT STATE OF CALIFORNIA goes back to Hiram Johnson. I've known them all, right up to but not including this current one, the actor. What do I think of him? Not much. Look at all the things he's promised, and look at what he's done.

Hiram Johnson, as I've told you, was a great, great man. I wasn't a lobbyist in Sacramento when he was governor, but I knew him over the years and helped in his campaigns for the United States Senate. The first governor I worked with was William D. Stephens. He had been lieutenant governor, and he became governor when Johnson moved to the Senate in 1917.

When Stephens ran for governor in 1918, I supported him. Like so many elections in those cross-filing years, the real battle was in the primary. Stephens was running against another Republican, James Rolph, Jr., the mayor of San Francisco. Stephens won the Republican nomination, and Rolph won on the Democratic ticket. But under the cross-filing law, Rolph couldn't run unless he was nominated by his own party. So Stephens was unopposed in the final election.

Stephens's lieutenant governor was Dick Carnahan, who

gave us a little trouble. As president of the Senate, he had the power to appoint committees. He didn't take a liking to having some of us fellows making suggestions as to whom he should appoint. So we took the goddam thing away from him. We had the senate set up its own committee on rules, with the power to appoint committees. That showed Carnahan a thing or two. He was an able man, but he just got too smart for his own good.

I liked Bill Stephens, and when he ran for reelection in 1922, I was his campaign manager in Northern California. Unfortunately there was a conservative tide that year, and the Republican nomination went to Friend W. Richardson, who campaigned for economy. Richardson was elected, and he cut the budgets for all the state services, including the schools. He said, "The schools must be put on a business basis; they must not only teach but practice thrift." That sound familiar?

Richardson didn't bother me, and I didn't bother him. I knew he couldn't last.

In 1926, I put my support behind Clement C. Young for governor. C. C. Young had taught at the University of California and then became Speaker of the Assembly and lieutenant governor. He was a fine man, an able man. After he became governor, he *ran* the state. He didn't fool around with politics. If anybody wanted something political, he came to see Alexander McCabe or Art Samish. Once you had McCabe's or Samish's okay, that was all you needed.

When C. C. Young ran for reelection in 1930, I handled the San Francisco campaign. That was a tough fight, because Young was up against Jim Rolph in the primary. Rolph was a whoopee dresser, and he attracted a lot of attention with his cowboy boots and fancy duds. Rolph won in a very close election.

Jim Rolph was sore at me for opposing him, but he got over it. One of my good friends was Dan O'Brien, who had been Rolph's chief of police in San Francisco. You know his son, George O'Brien, the movie star.

It was through Dan O'Brien that Jim Rolph was convinced

that I wasn't such a bad fellow after all. Before long I was just as friendly with Rolph as I had been with C. C. Young. Dan O'Brien and I had a lot of fun together. Rolph appointed him head of the Motor Vehicle Department, and he had a bill for the department that he wanted to put through the legislature. Well, I put it through all right. But then I put it in my pocket and wouldn't give it to anyone. For several days I walked around with that bill in my pocket. That just drove Dan O'Brien nuts. Those were the days when I was drinking, and I did a lot of crazy things.

Jim Rolph died in his last year of office, and he was succeeded on June 7, 1934, by Lieutenant Governor Frank F. Merriam. Later that year he ran for governor against Upton Sinclair, the writer.

I had a lot to do with getting Merriam elected. He asked me to set up his headquarters, and I did. I also raised a lot of money for his campaign, something like \$200,000. Of course it wasn't hard to raise money, because a lot of the wealthy Republicans were scared as hell of Sinclair. I didn't have anything against Sinclair; I didn't even know him. But Frank Merriam was my man.

That was a hell of a mistake. Frank Merriam was a real faker, the bald-headed son of a bitch. If I had known what I found out later, I could have handled him. I learned later that he had been run out of Iowa for a phony insurance scheme or some damn thing.

Merriam gave me nothing but trouble. You take that Gilmore Exploration Bill.

Some of the independent oil companies had been buying up property at Huntington Beach, one of the big oil fields in Southern California. They figured it would be a good idea to drill out in the ocean, but the trouble was that the state figured it owned the ocean three miles out. So Earl Gilmore, Tom Simmons, and some of the other oilmen came to me and asked if I could get a bill through the legislature giving them permission to drill in the tidelands. I said I'd think it over.

I'll tell you how I operated.

When someone came to me with a proposition, I'd study its chances, size it up. I wouldn't enter into a deal unless I was pretty damn sure I could produce results. Most of the time I did. In fact, I can't recall an instance in which I had an important failure.

I was a contingency worker. I didn't expect to get something for nothing. If I couldn't put through the legislation, I didn't expect to get paid. But if I *did* put it through—that was another matter. I was the highest-priced man in the business. I made no bones about that.

When the oilmen came to me with the Gilmore Exploration Bill, I made a "hurdle deal" with them. I was to be paid such-and-such amount of dollars for each hurdle. So much when it passed the senate committee, so much when it passed the senate, so much when it passed the assembly committee, so much when it passed the assembly. Each hurdle brought a new check. I don't remember how much, but it was a nice bundle.

So I had the bill introduced in the senate. It passed the senate committee and the senate, then it went through the assembly committee and to the assembly. There it was amended to allow the director of finance to enter into leases for the tidelands.

The amended bill passed the assembly, then it had to go back to the senate committee and then to the senate. I managed to get it through each hurdle and was paid accordingly.

But there was one hurdle I hadn't counted on—Governor Merriam.

While I was getting the bill through the senate again, Merriam called me to his office. "You know, Art, if you send that bill to me, I'll have to veto it," he told me.

I was sore as hell at him. "Why, you dirty old bastard, we went to a lot of trouble to get that bill through!" I said.

"I can't help that," he said. "If it gets to my desk, I'm going to veto it."

There wasn't a damn thing I could do. I let the bill get

amended in the senate and sent back to the assembly, where it died. I found out what happened with Merriam. He and some lawyer in Long Beach had made a deal with Standard Oil.

I went to Tom Simmons and I tore up the check he had given me.

"You earned the money—keep it," he said.

"I know I earned it," I said. "But I didn't get your bill through. So I won't take any of your money." And I didn't.

That son of a bitch Merriam had cost me many thousands of dollars. And he was going to give me all kinds of other troubles, too. But I gave him plenty in return, too. I'll tell you about that later.

CHAPTER 8

Demonstrating Why They Called Art Samish the Guy Who Gets Things Done

I FIGURE THAT DURING THE 1920s I WAS LEARNING MY TRADE IN Sacramento. By the 1930s I was ready to swing into action. And I mean swing. I had my offices in San Francisco, with a big staff in the Kohl Building. I also had offices in the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. And when the legislature was in session, I operated from my suite in the Capitol Hotel.

I never went to the capitol, the way the other lobbyists did. I didn't need to. I had my Gestapo working for me. I knew exactly what was going on at all times. A staff of men and girls attended all the legislative sessions, including the committee hearings, and they reported to me.

Nobody knew more about what was going on in the capitol than I did. Not even the newspapermen. In fact, they came to me for information. Say the *San Francisco Examiner* or the *Los Angeles Times* had one reporter to cover all of Sacramento. The poor guy couldn't be everywhere at once. So when it got to be deadline time and there was a committee hearing he couldn't cover, he'd call me. I gave him the straight dope. No charge. Those newspaper boys were my friends.

By midnight I had a full report of everything that had gone on during that day and evening. Then I could plan my strategy for the following day. I didn't like surprises. For that reason I saw to it that a rule was passed by the legislature declaring that no bill could be heard in either house without two weeks' notice. In that way I could be prepared for any legislation that affected my clients. I didn't want a bill popping up before I had a chance to decide whether it was good or bad for our interests.

During the 1930s, more and more organizations were coming to me with their particular legislative problems. Usually Dr. Samish could provide a cure.

One day a man from a San Francisco law firm came to me and said, "Art, we've got a problem."

"Well, you came to the right man," I said. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"Our client, the American Hawaiian Sugar Company has built a structure worth thirty to forty million dollars near the Carquinez Bridge. We checked the title to the property and we found out that American Hawaiian doesn't own it."

"That's quite some problem. Who does own the property?"

"The state of California."

"I see. And what do you want the doctor to do about it?"

"Anything you can. We need help."

They sure did. American Hawaiian had this big plant there in the tidelands of the San Francisco Bay, where all the big ships docked with the sugar. And they didn't own the property. They would have had one hell of a time moving the whole shebang.

I went back to Sacramento and I had a bill introduced in the legislature giving the director of finance power to enter into a lease with the American Hawaiian Sugar Company for the use of that tidelands property. When the bill got over to the assembly, I had the stipulation put in that the lease should be for sixty-nine years. I don't know how I arrived at that figure; it just seemed like a good number.

That bill went through the legislature without a ripple. Not a ripple. I can assure you that the American Hawaiian Sugar Company was mighty relieved to have it passed. They expressed their gratitude in the form of a very large check for Dr. Samish's services.

Two years later, just so everything would remain safe, I introduced into the legislature a validating measure. That protected the lease from any future problems.

Was the legislature aware that American Hawaiian had already built a huge plant on that property?

I never concerned myself with whether the legislature was or wasn't aware of certain matters. My only concern was to take care of my clients. And I did.

In 1935, a Hollywood agent named M. C. Levee came to the doctor with a problem. It seems that Assemblyman Thomas Maloney of San Francisco had introduced a bill to make it unlawful for any employment agency to charge more than 7 percent of the first month's salary for getting people jobs. All the agents in the movie business were up in arms because they thought the law would apply to them. If so, that would ruin them, because they charged actors and directors and other talent 10 percent of all earnings.

The agents couldn't pay very much for the doctor's fee—only \$5,000. But I agreed to take on their case.

No problem. Assembly Bill No. 403 got through the assembly, but somehow it got stuck in the senate judiciary committee. There it died a natural death.

Two years later, Mr. Levee came to me again.

"What's the problem this time?" the doctor asked.

"It's this Assembly Bill No. 1226," said the agent. "This time it specifically mentions talent agents and limits us to charging the same commissions as employment agencies. If it goes through, all the agents in Hollywood will be ruined. Can you help us?"

"Certainly I can. But it will cost double what you paid the last time."

Assembly Bill No. 1226 had its funeral in the assembly judiciary committee. Death was quick and painless.

Over the years I performed a lot of services for people in Hollywood who were concerned about legislation. I came to know all the studio bosses—Louis B. Mayer, Harry Cohn, Jack Warner, and so on. My particular pal was Joseph Schenck. He was a wonderful man, a real sweetheart. He and I spent weeks together at his big house in Florida. Whatever Joe Schenck wanted, I got for him.

During the 1930s a lot of the other states were going for Daylight Saving Time. Joe Schenck and other movie bosses were against it, figuring that the extra hour of sunlight would keep people from going to the movies. I took care of it. All proposals to introduce Daylight Saving Time to California were defeated. The state didn't get it until World War II, when the extra daylight was important to save electric power.

Another of my clients was the National Orange Show in San Bernardino.

Now you might ask why an orange show would need the services of a lobbyist in Sacramento. Very simple. I managed to put through a measure which provided that 5 percent of the state's income from pari-mutuel betting at the racetracks would go to the National Orange Show. In the 1937–1938 fiscal year, that amounted to \$111,000. With that kind of money you can buy a lot of oranges.

I felt good about that. I drank a lot of orange juice, especially after I quit boozing. It seemed right that the racetracks should contribute to the orange industry. Especially after all that I had contributed toward improving the racehorse breed. Some newspaper stories claimed that I bet a million dollars a year on the horses. That was an exaggeration. At least I think it was.

I may not always have been lucky at the track, but I made it pay off in another way: by selling my services as a lobbyist.

After horse racing became legal in California in 1933,

there was a lot of legislation which was important to the new racetracks. Dr. Charles Strub, the man who ran Santa Anita, realized this, and he hired the right man to look after his interests in Sacramento. I represented Hollywood Park, too.

For several years I made sure that Doc Strub's bonanza at Santa Anita wasn't tampered with. The state's pari-mutuel take remained at the same rate, and no new tracks were authorized. Santa Anita was assured of no serious competition.

It would have stayed that way except for Doc Strub's attitude. One day I was enjoying myself out at his race emporium in Arcadia when a messenger came to tell me, "Dr. Strub wants to see you."

I went all the way up to his cupola on top of the stadium, and Doc Strub started dictating to me what he wanted done.

When he was through, I stared at him for a moment. "You know, Charlie," I said, "I don't like you. That's going to cost you a hundred thousand dollars."

"What?" he said.

"That's right—a hundred thousand dollars. I quit."

I cost him a lot more than that. All of a sudden there was a different climate in Sacramento for racetracks, especially Santa Anita. The legislature started passing laws for a bigger take of the pari-mutuel betting. New racetracks were authorized, providing more competition for the established ones. And the state began clamping down on the outside investments of Santa Anita.

Doc Strub knew when he was licked. He whined, begged, pleaded for me to come back.

"Artie, I need you!" he said. "I may have to close the track if you don't help me!"

He sent his attorney to dicker with me. I told him I wanted a hundred thousand dollars, just like I told Doc in his cupola. We dickered and we dickered, and I let them off the hook for fifty thousand.

Suddenly the climate switched back in Sacramento. Once

again Santa Anita got the kind of legislation it wanted, and Doc Strub could pack away his millions without undue interference.

Another one of my clients during the 1930s was a big diesel company. This was at a time when diesel trucks were just being introduced on the California highways, and the oil companies were worried about the competition from a cheaper fuel. Somehow a bill was introduced by one of the legislators to tax diesel fuel at the same rate per gallon as gasoline. Naturally diesel people didn't like that. So some of them hired me to do something about it.

It was a tough assignment. Any time you're up against the oil companies, you've got a job on your hands. But, as I learned early in the game, there's more than one way to skin a cat.

The bill was introduced in the assembly, and I managed to keep it there until the closing days of the session. It passed unanimously and then moved over to the senate. Culbert Olson, the senator from Los Angeles and later governor, handled its progress.

On the last day of the session, the bill came up for the vote in the senate. Senator Olson proposed inclusion of an urgency clause, which would have made the law effective immediately upon signing by the governor instead of the usual ninety-one days.

The senate passed the bill, but now it had to be reprinted with the urgency clause and returned to the assembly for passage. With the clock ticking away the final hours of the session, the bill was sent off to the printer. Under the law, the legislative session ended at midnight.

A messenger was sent to pick up the bill and deliver it to the assembly. But as midnight approached, Governor Merriam was addressing the assembly with a farewell speech in his usual dreary style. As he droned on and on, my good friend Charlie Lyons, the floor leader, also opposed to the bill, kept telling him, "You're doing fine, Governor; keep it up."

The author of the bill kept calling, "Mr. Speaker! Mr.

Speaker!" But he couldn't gain recognition, and some of his more playful colleagues kept turning down his hearing aid.

The messenger with the bill entered the assembly at 11:50, and he was intercepted by my assistant, Frank (Porky) Flynn.

"Young man, you must observe protocol," said Frank. "You never interrupt the governor when he is speaking."

And so the bill remained in the messenger's hand until the clock marked midnight. The Speaker, Ted Craig, pounded the gavel and announced, "This assembly is now adjourned, *sine die*."

That was the end of the diesel tax bill, at least for another two years. It was a case of The Law That Never Became a Law.

CHAPTER 9

The Making of a Legislator, 1934

DURING MY ADVENTURES IN THE LOBBYING TRADE, I MET EVERY kind of legislator—teetotalers and drunks, wise men and fools, churchmen and atheists, family men and lechers. Some of them were real characters.

You take old Senator William Kehoe.

Now there was a rare bird. He represented Inyo, Mono—the real cow counties. You could drive for fifty miles in his district and not see a single human being. Or even an animal. He even represented Death Valley, which gives you an idea of how desolate his area was.

Kehoe had his district sewed up, and he kept coming back to the senate term after term. And every time the legislature met, he introduced the same measure.

You see, Indians formed a large part of his constituency, and naturally he was for the Indians. He believed Indians should have the same rights as other American citizens, and that included the right to take a drink now and then. Federal law prohibited the sale of liquor to Indians on reservations, and the senator didn't think that was right.

So at every session of the legislature Senator Kehoe introduced a measure that would permit Indians to buy liquor. It didn't matter to him that the federal law would have precluded such a measure. He still went through the motions of introducing his law and trying to shepherd it through committee and onto the floor. He was dead serious about it, and he got sore as hell when he lost, as he inevitably did.

At one session his fellow senators sympathized with his crusade and he managed to get it passed through the upper house. Then it went to the assembly, where it had a hearing before the public morals committee.

There it suffered a quick death. One of the Public Morals Committee members was Eleanor Miller, who was from Pasadena and about as strong a Dry as you could find. She voted against everything that had to do with the sale of liquor. Naturally she led the fight against the law that would have allowed the Death Valley redskins to purchase firewater.

Senator Kehoe fussed and fumed about his defeat. He vowed he would have vengeance against his enemies.

The opportunity arose at the same session. Assemblywoman Miller introduced a pest-control measure that would benefit only the citizens of Pasadena. It was a minor measure, and her fellow members of the assembly quickly passed it out of respect for the assemblywoman from Pasadena.

Then her bill went to the senate. As was the custom, she appeared before the committee hearing to advocate the bill. She was an elocution teacher, and she made an eloquent presentation, explaining why the state should lend assistance to her bug-plagued constituents.

Senator Kehoe gave her the stony eye throughout her speech. When she had finished, he took the floor. He rolled his own cigarettes, and for a few moments he was silent as he sprinkled Bull Durham over the paper, the tobacco flying all over the committee table.

"Eleanor," he began, "you voted against my law that

would have permitted the braves in my district to buy booze—didn't you?"

"Yes, Senator, I did," she replied. "I am firmly opposed to the selling of hard liquor to Indians."

"Eleanor," he continued, "I don't give a damn if the pissants eat up everything in Pasadena. I move that this bill be tabled."

"Second the motion!" yelled two or three of his fellow senators, and Kehoe lighted up his cigarette with intense satisfaction as the Miller Bill went down to defeat.

Of all the legislators I knew during my years in Sacramento, none was more endearing than John Pelletier.

He's quite a story. Put it in a movie and you might have trouble convincing the customers that it wasn't some scriptwriter's fantasy. But it's true, by God.

The whole thing started early in 1934, when I got a phone call from my man in Los Angeles, Bill Jasper. He had been talking to one of our most important clients, a brewer we'll call Ernie.

"What's up, Bill?" I asked.

"Ernie's got this crazy idea," Jasper said. "He wants us to run somebody against Woolwine."

"That's a crazy idea, all right," I said. "What does he want to do that for?"

"He's mad at Woolwine for some damned thing. He wants to throw a scare in him, to teach him a lesson."

"Did you tell Ernie we couldn't put out any dough for such foolishness?"

"Sure. I told him that. He's willing to lay out the money. This is a private thing with him. What'll I do, Art?"

"What'll you do? Ernie's an important man with us, isn't he? We have to satisfy his whims. Get him a candidate."

"But where? How?"

"I don't give a damn where you find him. Just get him a candidate. We'll satisfy the son of a bitch."

The whole thing smacked of insanity. This Clair Woolwine was considered unbeatable. He was a member of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in Los Angeles—his brother had been district attorney. The voters knew Clair Woolwine as a classy guy, and he was about the most meticulous man I ever knew. He got shaved twice a day. When he was drunk, he even got himself manicured twice a day. His assembly district was the 44th, which comprised downtown Los Angeles. In early California, that was where the elite lived. But as the city grew, the elite moved to the outskirts, and the downtown became slums. During the Depression year of 1934, the 44th district had a high percentage of unemployed, winos, and just plain bums.

Where the hell was Bill Jasper going to find a candidate to run against Clair Woolwine? The guy had won both Republican and Democratic primaries in election after election, and his political opposition was nil. Woolwine was a Republican, but as far as the voters were concerned, he was nonpartisan.

Bill Jasper is a resourceful fellow. He went down to the Grand Avenue headquarters of Upton Sinclair, who was trying to get the Democratic nomination for governor. Jasper went inside the place, which was a dingy old store, and he found about forty campaign workers tying up bundles of E.P.I.C. (End Poverty in California) literature for mailing.

Campaign workers! Hell, they were bums. They had been rounded up at soup kitchens and flophouses to wrap bundles for fifty cents a day. They were ragged and unshaven and dirty.

"Any of you fellows from the forty-fourth district?" Jasper yelled.

One tattered old-timer raised his hand. "I am," he replied. He was skinny as a rail, and his bad teeth made his jaw up-swept like a ski jump.

"What's your name?" Jasper asked.

"John Pelletier."

"Are you an American citizen?"

"Of course I'm an American citizen," the man answered indignantly.

"Well, you talk with an accent, so I just wondered," said Jasper.

"I grew up in French Canada. But I was born in this country."

"Okay," said Jasper. "How'd you like to run for the state legislature?"

Pelletier looked at Jasper as if he was nuts.

"I mean it," said Jasper. "Come with me."

Jasper bought him a meal, which Pelletier ate like a starving man. Jasper learned that he was a French Canadian who had been born in Maine and grew up in Montreal. He returned to Maine and graduated from Bates University. In spite of his education, Pelletier never could make a go of it. His French-Canadian accent seemed to hold him back, and he dropped lower and lower on the social scale.

When Jasper picked him up, Pelletier was living in one of those big old crumbling houses that used to be on top of Bunker Hill. He and ten other guys shared the joint at twenty dollars a month. They came and went, and there was always a mulligan stew on the stove to feed them when they were hungry. Pelletier lived on the twelve dollars a month he got for country relief and whatever odd jobs he could find. Like tying up bundles at the Sinclair headquarters at four bits a day.

After he fed Pelletier, Jasper took him to my headquarters in the Biltmore Hotel. The little French Canadian was still dazed at what was happening to him.

"First of all, we gotta clean you up," Jasper said. "We'll burn those goddam clothes and get you a new suit. Look there . . ."

Jasper pointed out the window at a sign on the other side of Pershing Square. It was a Foreman and Clark store that advertised a man's suit for twenty-five dollars.

"Twenty-five dollars!" Pelletier said. "That's too much. I

know a tailor shop at Third and Spring that I sometimes deliver handbills for. I could get two suits for twenty-five dollars over there."

"Okay, let's go."

Jasper took the little man to the tailor shop and bought him the suits, as well as shirts, socks, underwear and everything else he needed. Then Jasper delivered Pelletier to the Luxor Baths at Sixth and Spring.

"Here's ten bucks," Jasper told the attendant. "Clean him up."

When Jasper reported to me what he had done, I had to bust out laughing.

"You crazy son of a bitch, Jasper," I said.

"Shall I go ahead and run him, Art?" he asked.

"Hell, yes. The man wanted a candidate to scare Woolwine. Okay, we got him. Sure—go ahead. We can have a lot of laughs with this one."

When Jasper got Pelletier washed and shaved and dressed up in his new suit, the guy didn't look half bad. Not really good, either, but presentable enough. The first thing to do was to get him filed as a Democratic candidate in the 44th assembly district. Jasper asked him, "What do you do?"

"What do I do?" Pelletier said.

"Yeah," said Jasper. "You gotta list your occupation on the ballot under your name. So what do you do?"

"Well, you know those jobs I do sometimes."

"Yeah, but we can't list you as a handbill-passer. What else do you do?"

"Well, I stay at home and read a lot."

"Good. We'll list you as 'researcher.'"

Next we needed some advertising for our candidate. Jasper asked him for a photograph of himself. The only one he had was one taken twenty-five years before when he was in college.

"That'll do," said Jasper. He combined the youthful-looking photograph with a shot of the state capitol and had a hun-

dred thousand cards printed. Pelletier spent his days handing out the cards all over the 44th district. Jasper gave him ten bucks a day for campaign expenses. Also to live on. We had taken him off the relief rolls when he filed for the assembly. It wouldn't have been good publicity to have it known that our candidate was on the dole.

Pelletier went to Jasper one day and said, "You know, I used to sweep out a sign shop over on Third Street. One of the fellows over there is a friend of mine, and he says he'll make me some posters if I supply the muslin and silk screen."

So Jasper bought five hundred yards of material and soon there were posters all over the district advertising "Vote for John Pelletier for Assembly."

I'll be goddammed if the son of a bitch didn't win the Democratic primary! By a thousand votes out of about nine thousand!

Jasper telephoned me in San Francisco to say that the brewer had called him to thank him for scaring Woolwine. "Now the fun's over and we gotta elect Clair," the brewer said. He sent his personal check for \$2,000 to cover the campaign expenses.

"But I only spent eight hundred," Jasper told me. "That leaves me with twelve hundred left over."

"So what?" I said.

"Well, I kinda got interested in the little guy," Jasper said.

"And you'd like to lay that twelve hundred on his campaign?"

"Well—yes."

"Why not? It's no skin off my ass. Go ahead and have your fun."

Jasper had his fun, all right. John Pelletier was elected assemblyman from the 44th district!

"Jesus, we got a wild turkey on our hands!" Jasper told me. "What are we gonna do now?"

"We're gonna make him a legislator," I said.

First of all, we had to fix his jaw. I sent him to see my pal, Painless Parker, who did a first-class job of rebuilding the jaw. I had Jasper go out and buy Pelletier a soup-and-fish, which he would need for the inaugural ball. And, because he didn't have a dime, I gave him the train fare to Sacramento.

On the night of the ball, I was in my suite at the Hotel Senator when a call came from Pelletier. He was in his room at the Berry Hotel.

"I'm in trouble!" he said.

"What the hell's the matter?" I said, expecting the worst.

"This goddam suit I'm supposed to wear," he said. "It's got no belt loops. How the hell am I going to hold my pants up? And this shirt is the goddamnedest thing I ever saw. It's stiff as a board and it buttons up the back."

"Don't worry," I assured him. "I'll send Jasper over to help you." Jasper went out and bought him suspenders to keep the pants up and showed him how to fasten a boiled shirt.

We managed to get Pelletier together, and he was sworn in as assemblyman of the Great State of California. He served out his term and got reelected. And reelected. In fact, John Pelletier was elected five times from the 44th district.

He wasn't a bad legislator at all. He had a degree of intelligence and he voted according to his conscience. Always he was for the poor, the downtrodden—quite naturally, because he was one of them. And why shouldn't the poor have their own representative in the legislature? I thought it was a dandy idea.

Assemblyman Pelletier had only one failing: he hated lawyers. He'd listen for hours as the attorney members of the assembly argued back and forth on the fine points of the law. Then it got to be too much for him and he'd leap up, not waiting to be recognized by the Chair.

"Mr. Speaker," he shouted. "There are too goddamned

many lawyers in this assembly! I am going to introduce a constitutional amendment which will limit the number of lawyers who can serve in this body."

Pelletier's service in the assembly did not change his way of life. He still lived up on Bunker Hill, though now he had a room of his own instead of sharing a house and mulligan with his cohorts. He spent his days walking around his district to speak with his constituents, picking up a meal here, a cigar there. I'd venture a guess that he was the only legislator in the history of California who lived on his hundred-dollar-a-month salary. To John Pelletier, that was plenty.

One day in 1945, Bill Jasper called me with sad news: John Pelletier had died.

"God rest his soul," I said. "I guess we'll have to bury him. Well, let's bury him in style."

Many is the time that I picked up the tab for the funeral of a legislator or one of his relatives. This time I wanted to be sure that John Pelletier received the grade-A treatment.

I just guessed he was a Catholic because of his French-Canadian background. So I took over St. Vibiani's Cathedral on Second Street and I ordered the full choir, the high mass, the whole works. All the dignitaries of the state government appeared for the services. So did John's ragged old buddies from Bunker Hill.

It was one hell of a show. I just hope that John Pelletier was up there somewhere, looking down and enjoying it all.

CHAPTER 10

In Which I Tell How Weak Beer and a Strong Hand Helped the Beverage Industry to Higher Profits and Lower Taxes

IN SEPTEMBER OF 1935 I BEGAN WHAT WAS TO BE A LONG AND profitable association with the California State Brewers Association. Profitable to the brewers. Profitable to Art Samish.

I really did a job for those boys. This will prove to you the kind of a job I did: as long as Art Samish represented the brewing industry, the tax on beer never increased. For twenty years it remained sixty-two cents a barrel—and there are thirty-one gallons to the barrel.

Taxes on everything else went up during those twenty years. Not on beer. Every time a proposal came up in the legislature to increase the beer tax, it somehow never got out of committee.

While I was in charge of the brewers' relations with the legislature, the tax on beer was the lowest in the United States.

I was able to perform other services for the brewers, too. For instance, I saw to it that the alcoholic content of beer in California was kept a 3.2 percent. Why? I'll tell you why.

Congress decreed that 3.2 beer is not intoxicating. So if a drink is not intoxicating, there's no reason why it can't be

sold to adults in any kind of an establishment. Anybody in the state of California could get a beer license for ten dollars. Before long, there were 47,000 places with beer licenses. That meant that a lot of beer went over the counter.

Of course the beer wasn't very damn good—what do you expect of 3.2? But the customers didn't mind. Hell, this was back in the thirties, when Americans had been starved for beer for a dozen years. The California drinkers were glad to be able to buy any kind.

You'll make note of the fact that I represented the California brewers. That meant that I had to protect their interests against any out-of-state beers, even if they did make Milwaukee famous.

So I had the legislature put through a law that each shipment of beer into California constituted a new license and had to be taxed accordingly. Oh, I was rough on those Eastern brewers. I made it so the California brewers had a virtual monopoly.

That law was airtight, too. It went all the way up to the Supreme Court and it stood up. None of the big nationally advertised beers could get a foothold in California. Finally in the 1950s they started buying out the California brewers and building their own plants in the state. By that time I had to have the law repealed. It was too drastic.

One time Coors tried to come into California with a six-ounce bottle. We didn't like that competition. Besides, those little bottles could easily get into the hands of children. That wouldn't be right. So we managed to get through a law stating that the minimum size of a beer bottle in the state was eleven ounces. Good-bye, Coors.

Naturally such services were very valuable to the brewers, and they paid accordingly. My basic fee was \$30,000 a year.

The brewers also contributed five cents for each and every barrel they produced. This went into an educational fund to

be used as I saw fit. The amount of the fund came to around \$150,000, and I put that money to good use.

I did such a good job for the brewers that other elements of the liquor industry saw fit to make use of my organization. My assistant, Frank X. Flynn, also represented the California Liquor Dealers Association and the wholesale dealers of Northern and Southern California. So we had virtually the entire industry united behind us.

That was the way I wanted it. Only by being unified could the liquor industry protect its interests. There were 50,000 liquor outlets in the state of California. I figured that through employees and relatives, each could account for an average of ten votes. If they could be educated as to what were the best interests of their industry, that would mean a half-million votes as a starter!

Not only that. Each retail outlet had contact with hundreds of customers. If those customers could be swayed to a certain candidate or issue, that would mean additional political power.

Not only that. Through the beer and liquor dealers and manufacturers, we had control of more than four thousand billboards—in the state. Those could be used to good advantage at election time.

Carey McWilliams analyzed my setup this way:

What Mr. Samish has done is to convert the interest-group into a political machine which functions independently of the party. From the lobbyists' point of view, of course, this represents a distinct advance in the forms of political control. A party machine can be challenged at the polls but as long as Artie controls the interest-groups, his power is beyond dispute.

Theoretically his power could be challenged by the interest-groups he represents but—and this is the key to

the structure of power he has fashioned—these groups enjoy, despite the costs, great advantages from his representation.

In the first place, the state takes over the function and also the expense of policing the particular industry against “unfair trade practices”—an enormous saving in itself. In the second place, each industry-group and each individual member is spared the trouble and expense of dealing with individual politicians.

After all, it was much more practical to have the state enforce the industry's trade practices. That's why I put through the fair-trade laws.

The beverage business could have been hurt by unfair competition. For instance, the Thrifty Drug Store chain had a wholesale liquor license. That allowed Thrifty to charge less for the liquor it sold. It was unfair to competitors. We had to see that Thrifty's wholesale license was taken away.

Still, Thrifty and other big chains could offer bargain prices on certain liquors or beers as loss leaders—to get customers into the stores to buy other things. That had to be stopped.

I did it first through the Board of Equalization, which had jurisdiction over the beverage industry in California. The board provided the price-posting regulations.

But then it appeared that this action by the board might not be entirely authorized by state laws. So I had to get the legislature to provide a law. No problem. The bill providing the system of price-posting in the wholesaling of beer was passed in 1937. The bill also made legal fair-trade practices for any alcoholic beverage. That stabilized the industry, and it stayed that way as long as I was in charge.

As guardian of the beverage industry's interests, I had to keep an eye out for the Prohibitionists.

Now you'd think that after the failure of Prohibition, the

Drys would have given up. Not at all. They kept coming back, trying to make inroads on the legal sale of alcoholic beverages. Oh, we had some walloping fights.

In 1936 the Drys came forward with an initiative constitutional amendment which provided: “Every city, town, county, city-and-county, or territory outside of incorporated cities or towns, shall have the power to regulate, zone or prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages within its limits.”

Local option. That was something that could have severely damaged the beverage industry. As soon as beverage control got out of the hands of the state and into local hands, that meant trouble. There would have been towns all over the state that the Drys would have been able to close up for liquor sales. We had to fight that.

And fight it we did. After all, Art Samish had been around Sacramento a few years; he knew how to work the initiatives and referendums.

When an odious measure was going to appear on the ballot, it behooved you to place an opposition bill on the same ballot. One would cancel the other out, or at least confuse the voters enough so that both would be defeated.

Something else I learned: it pays to be on the top of the ballot. I always liked to have my measure listed as Proposition One, Two, or Three—any higher number had much less chance of passing.

How did I get the high position? Well, I had a lot of good friends in Sacramento, and one of them was Frank Jordan, the secretary of state, the man who decided what propositions appeared where on the ballot.

So it was no accident that the Dry initiative was placed Number Nine on the 1936 ballot. Ours was Number Three.

I spent a lot of money to promote Number Three and defeat Number Nine. Both of them were rejected by the voters, so I accomplished what I was after—to lick local option.

The Drys didn't give up. They came back in 1948 with

another local option initiative. It ended up as Proposition Twelve on the ballot.

My initiative on the same ballot was Number Two. If both amendments had passed and mine received more votes, it would have repealed Number Twelve. Proposition Two provided that the state laws against public saloons would remain in force—California didn't allow out-and-out saloons; food had to be served in drinking places. One provision forbade serving unaccompanied women, except at tables. That helped get us the sympathy vote.

I put on a hell of a fight. I raised \$750,000 from the big boys, the manufacturers and wholesalers. The big boys paid the bills and the little fellows did the work.

I sent letters to all 50,000 licensees telling them not to make any contributions. It was their job to get out in their own communities and rally public support against Prohibition.

Advertisements for our cause appeared in every newspaper in the state. Announcements were carried on every radio station. Billboards—I had them everywhere you looked.

I got a picture of a mother—the most beautiful mother you ever did see. She was wearing a gingham dress and holding a broom in her hand. The slogan said:

LET'S CLEAN THEM OUT—VOTE YES ON
NUMBER TWO!

That didn't have a damn thing to do with the proposition, but it sure as hell attracted a lot of sympathy.

The campaign against Number Twelve was just as strenuous. And it worked. Number Twelve was defeated in all fifty-eight counties. It got the most votes of any measure on the ballot and the count was two and a half to one against it—2,598,815 to 1,085,941! More than a million people in Los Angeles County voted against it.

When you get such a high "no" vote for any measure, the

other propositions are going to suffer, too. Proposition Number Two was also defeated. But I didn't give a damn. I had only put it up to wipe out Number Twelve.

After that experience, I got sore at the initiatives. It had become too damned expensive to fight them. So I decided to do something about it.

I saw to it that the law pertaining to petitions was changed. Under the old law, the Drys could start taking signatures in 1940 and if they had enough by 1950 they could get their proposal on the ballot.

The new law made it tougher. A group could file a petition with the attorney general for \$200, then get title from the secretary of state. Then the group had 150 days to get the necessary signatures, with the right to petition for an additional 90 days. To qualify for a position on the ballot, 8 percent of the total vote of the last state election would be required.

That made it terribly difficult for an initiative to qualify for the ballot. The expense of acquiring so many signatures in so little time was virtually prohibitive.

Which is why the beverage industry was never threatened by local option thereafter.

CHAPTER 11

Two Governors Try to Shoot Down Art Samish with the Philbrick Report, But Our Hero Has the Last Laugh, as Usual

AS YOU LEARNED IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTER, I TOOK GOOD CARE of my clients in the beverage industry. Very good care. Not only in legislative matters, but on the administration level, too. Some gentlemen who served on the State Board of Equalization were good friends of mine. So were those who served on the State Liquor Control Board. I watched after their best interests, and they watched after mine.

Every two years I would put through a legislative bill to provide salary increases for Board of Equalization employees. That was a very concrete way of showing my appreciation of their friendship.

But one year my plans ran counter to the philosophy of Governor Frank Merriam, a confirmed Prohibitionist. We had a confrontation that caused one of the biggest hubbubs of my career. And it didn't do his career much good, either.

One day I told the governor of my intention to put through the bill to raise salaries on the Liquor Control Board.

"I'll have to veto that bill, Art," Merriam told me. "You know I'm Dry, and I can't sign any bill that would help the Wets."

"You gotta sign it," I said.

"Can't do it," said the governor.

"Why, you bald-headed son of a bitch," I said, "I helped you get into that governor's chair. And I'll get your ass out of it, too."

Frank Merriam didn't take too kindly to what I had told him. He got behind a move by the state senator from Los Angeles County, Culbert L. Olson, to have an investigation of lobbying activities in Sacramento. On the last day of the 1937 session, the legislature authorized the investigation. I let Merriam have it—I had nothing to hide.

Merriam appropriated \$50,000 to finance the investigation by the Sacramento County grand jury, conducted by District Attorney Otis D. Babcock. A private investigator was hired, a man by the name of Howard R. Philbrick.

I had a lot of fun with him. I knew he was bugging my office and my telephone. So every time I walked into my office, I said quite loudly, "Good morning, Mr. Philbrick." And when I answered the phone, I said, "Now listen to this, Mr. Philbrick."

They started to have those grand jury hearings, and they fooled around and fooled around until they finally got to the guy they were after: Art Samish.

I played a little cat-and-mouse with them at first.

The D.A., this fellow Babcock, issued a subpoena for me in Sacramento. I conferred with my attorney, John Francis Neylan, an old friend and one of the most distinguished men in California—he was the chief legal advisor to William Randolph Hearst. Mr. Neylan advised me not to appear, so I took off for San Francisco.

Babcock chased me down there and had me arrested by a county detective from Sacramento. It didn't bother me. I handed over a thousand-dollar bill as bail to insure my appearance in court.

So I went back to Sacramento and accepted another subpoena to appear. Not only was I happy to talk to the grand

jury. I let them throw the proceedings open to the public, instead of talking behind closed doors, as with most grand jury hearings.

So there was Art Samish in the spotlight, appearing before eight hundred spectators in the county supervisors' hearing room. I put on a good show for them.

Of course I knew all along that Frank Merriam was out to get me. He was up for reelection that year, and I was doing my best to give him trouble by backing his lieutenant governor, George Hatfield, in the primary election. Merriam won, as I expected, but the race damaged his chances in the final election.

I decided to let the public know what great buddies the governor and I had been. I turned over to the district attorney a couple of photographs which Merriam had enscribed to me—"to a pal, Art Samish." Naturally I showed them to reporters first.

I also produced some letters in which Merriam had thanked me profusely for the help I had provided in the 1934 election.

Merriam had provided the money to hire not only his gumshoe Philbrick but a special prosecutor, George M. Naus. It was this Naus who questioned me at first. Whenever he asked me a question, I answered him by beginning, "My good man . . ." No matter how nasty he became, I still replied, "My good man . . ."

That drove him nuts. One night at the Hotel Senator he accosted me and said, "Mr. Samish if you continue saying 'My good man,' I shall have to take offense with you."

The next day he asked me the first question on the stand, and I replied, "My good man . . ."

I had fun with the district attorney, Babcock, too. While the grand jury hearings were going on, Babcock was up for reelection. I happened to hear of a young man just out of law school who seemed like a good candidate for prosecutor. Al-

most overnight, signs appeared all over Sacramento:

HONEST MCDOUGAL FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY

That really burned up Babcock. Almost got him defeated, too. One day when I was on the witness stand, he snapped at me, "You know a whole lot about McDougal's campaign, don't you?"

"If I had only had two or three days longer, I would have known more," I told him.

"But you didn't do it," said Babcock.

"No, but two or three more days and you wouldn't have been standing there as district attorney."

I really clowned it up. As I was watching the proceedings, I felt I was missing something. All those investigators and prosecutors came into the supervisors' chambers with their files and briefcases and notebooks, and I didn't have a thing. I decided I had to take care of that.

My good friend over the years was Walter King, who traveled with me all over the country and entertained me and my friends all the time. Walter was a piano player, one of the best, and a handy man to have around.

"Walter," I said to him, "we're going down to the bottom of K Street and buy ourselves a couple of suitcases. Then we're going to fill those suitcases with bricks and newspapers, and I want you to carry them into the grand jury hearings every day."

That's just what he did. Each day I appeared with Walter, and he placed the two suitcases on the chair in front of me. Then I put a legal pad on top of the suitcases. Every time Babcock or Naus asked me a question I didn't have the answer for, I wrote a very elaborate note on the pad and said, "I'll get that answer for you."

Everybody eyed those suitcases with great interest, believing that I had some secret papers inside.

When the grand jury hearing was all over, what do you suppose happened to Art Samish?

Not a damned thing. I wasn't even mentioned in the grand jury report. Of course it didn't hurt that I had three friends on the jury. Two were gentlemen that I had happened to meet in a bookmaking parlor. The other was a very important banker of my acquaintance.

Right in the midst of the grand jury investigation came the election for governor.

This time old Merriam was facing a tough opponent, Culbert L. Olson, who had been state senator from Los Angeles County. The Democrats were riding high in 1938; in fact, they would have won the governorship in 1934 if the public utilities and the other big interests hadn't been so dead set against Upton Sinclair.

I didn't give a damn about Olson, but I didn't want to see Merriam reelected, either. I had warned him that I'd help get his ass out of the governor's chair, and I did.

Merriam was a Dry, and he had sponsored a piece of legislation against the liquor industry. Naturally it didn't pass; Doc Samish saw to that. And I made sure that my clients realized that Merriam was no friend of theirs. I printed up a facsimile of that Dry bill, plastered Merriam's face on it and sent the circular to every one of the 50,000 liquor retailers in California. They got the message.

The investigation of Art Samish didn't end when Frank Merriam was voted out of office.

Merriam's sleuth, Howard Philbrick, had compiled a 185-page report about the findings of the investigation. It became known as the Philbrick Report. It almost didn't become known at all. Governor Olson sent it in a message to the legislature, and it was printed in the April 4, 1939, issue of the *Senate Daily Journal*. But then certain members of the legislature didn't like the way Mr. Philbrick had acquired some of his information. Not only had he bugged Art Samish; Philbrick

had even placed a microphone in the bedchamber of the Speaker of the Assembly and his wife!

The senate ordered the April 4 issue of the *Journal* destroyed and reprinted without the Philbrick Report. But then Governor Olson ordered 15,000 copies printed at his office's expense.

And just what did Mr. Philbrick report about the nefarious Art Samish?

Here are some excerpts:

Most of the lines of inquiry, at one time or another led to Arthur H. Samish, a relatively young San Francisco man who calls himself variously a public relations counsel, a legislative representative and "a guy who gets things done."

If all investigative roads led to Mr. Samish, it was only natural. For he was unusually modest when he registered in the Senate lobby list as the representative of the Motor Carriers Association, San Francisco. Investigation showed that he actually was a lobbyist for motor carrier, railroad, liquor, racing, theatrical and other interests.

Mr. Samish was the prototype of the lobbyist—and the envy of droves of his financially less successful competitors in the business of selling influence. Between 1935 and 1938, a total of \$496,138.62, all of it from interests concerned with legislation, flowed into the many bank accounts of Mr. Samish. Investigators never presumed to believe that they had established a record of all of Mr. Samish's income from bank records, from testimony dragged from his evasive lips, from income tax reports he produced after fighting through the State Supreme Court and from corollary investigation. . . .

As California's arch-lobbyist, Mr. Samish represented all of the methods used in part or in full by members of his

trade—campaign contributions to lawmakers with a lavish hand; fees to lawyer-legislators; cultivation of State departmental and legislative personnel with money or favors; knowledge of the mechanics of legislation and of the human frailties along the path.

The end and result of Mr. Samish's operations has been best phrased by Mr. Samish himself, in one of his infrequent candid comments: "I'm the Governor of the Legislature. To hell with the Governor of the State!"

Mr. Philbrick went on and on about the misdeeds of Arthur H. Samish, but all his words didn't prove a goddam thing. Nothing happened. Art Samish remained in business as usual.

But look what happened to Frank Merriam.

The old bastard was out of a job. He tried to go on being the Number One man in the Republican party in California, but I did something about that, too.

In 1940, a lot of the young Republicans in California were enthusiastic about the candidacy of Wendell Willkie for the presidential nomination. Former Governor Merriam was still the titular head of the Republican party in California, and Willkie was too progressive for him. He was in favor of a solid conservative, Robert A. Taft.

I didn't give a hoot about presidential politics. But I enjoyed doing anything to knock down Frank Merriam.

That chance came when the State Central Committee met for its convention in Sacramento. The night before the meeting, I was in the lobby of the Hotel Senator and I greeted a number of my friends on the Republican Committee. Among them was Ted Craig, whom I had known as Speaker of the Assembly. He seemed down in the dumps.

"What's the matter, Ted?" I asked.

"It's this race for State Central Committeeman," he said. "Willkie is coming to Sacramento for a speech tomorrow night, and we'd like to have a committeeman who would be for him.

But old man Merriam won't allow that. He's going to shove his own man down our throats."

"Well, you're not going to let the old son of a bitch get away with that, are you?" I said.

"Who the hell have we got to oppose Merriam's man?"

"How about that kid from Orange County—Tommy Kuchel?"

"Tommy's a nice guy, but he doesn't have a chance."

"I'm not so sure. Why don't you have a chat with Tommy? If he's willing to go along with it, you let the ole professor go to work on your problem."

Tom Kuchel, who was a twenty-nine-year-old assemblyman, said he was willing, and so I started making some calls. The key man was Jerry Seawell, the senate floor leader. He held the proxies for about one-third of the delegates who didn't come to the convention.

I decided to give Merriam the business. I called Jimmy Simms, an appraiser for the Board of Equalization who sometimes did some odd-job moonlighting for me. Jimmy had a child in the local high school, and I told him to recruit a hundred students at two bucks a head and send them to the gallery in the senate chambers, where the Republicans were to meet. They jammed the gallery and we instructed them to boo every time Frank Merriam's name was mentioned. Whenever Thomas Kuchel was mentioned, they were to cheer.

Everything went as planned.

Frank Merriam arrived and my small army of mercenaries hooted and hollered until his bald head turned lobster red. He made the nominating speech for his own candidate for state central committeeman, and the boos continued.

After a couple of seconding speeches, the chairman said, "Are there any more nominations?"

Senator Ralph Swing, one of the most respected members of the legislature, arose and said: "Mr. Chairman, Assemblyman Lyons has a name to place in nomination."

Charlie Lyons made the nomination speech, and every

time he mentioned the name of Tommy Kuchel, the youthful audience cheered as if he were the latest singing sensation. Ralph Swing seconded the nomination, and the clerk started to call the roll for voting.

Old Frank Merriam's bald pate turned even redder as delegates he had counted on voted for Thomas Kuchel. Then came Seawell, who cast his proxies for Kuchel. Merriam stalked out of the meeting, and his stooge made the motion to cast a unanimous ballot.

That night Tom Kuchel led the delegation to greet Wendell Willkie on his arrival in Sacramento. Tom later became state controller and then became a fine United States senator.

Frank Merriam? He slunk back to Long Beach and was never heard from again.

CHAPTER 12

In Which the Professor Tells of His Modus Operandi in Sacramento and Recounts a Tale or Two

OH, WE HAD SOME HIGH TIMES UP THERE IN SACRAMENTO.

And we got a hell of a lot of work done, too.

In those years, the legislature met only every other year. On the first Monday of January of the odd-numbered year, the legislators convened for three weeks of organizing and introducing of bills.

Then they adjourned while the bills were being printed. On the first Monday in March, the senators and assemblymen returned to take up the legislation. They usually adjourned in time to beat the Sacramento heat, in June or July. They didn't meet in the even-numbered years, except for special or budget sessions.

There were no frills in those days. Only the Speakers and the committee chairman had offices; the rest of the legislators worked from their desks on the assembly and senate floors. If they wanted to write letters, they had to get a girl from the stenographic pool for an hour or two.

Look at the California legislators today.

Each of them has a big suite of offices, a receptionist, a

private secretary, a field man, a state car with \$125 a month for gasoline, and God knows what else.

Now the legislature meets for almost ten months a year every year. But I swear that the old legislatures accomplished more in eight to ten months than the present ones do in twenty.

Of course, in the old days the legislators had the advantage of the efficient services of Arthur H. Samish and his associates.

I worked just as hard as the senators and assemblymen. Harder, in fact. They only had to watch over their own areas of interest. I had to keep an eye on the whole damned legislature!

That meant a twenty-four-hour day.

Sometimes I would get up at seven to breakfast with a senator before he went to the capitol. By eight, some of the committees were already holding their meetings, and the telephones started ringing with reports from my Gestapo.

My agents were everywhere. Not a single important meeting could be held in the capitol without one of my representatives being there to observe the happenings. They either telephoned the news or came to Samish Alley in the Senator Hotel and delivered the report in person. I had four big adjoining rooms, so I could have people waiting for me in each one. I didn't like my own agents to know each other; I knew their reports would be franker if they preserved their anonymity.

Throughout the day I received visitors both big and small: legislators and state executives, brewery owners and bartenders, newspaper publishers and bootblacks. All received the same Samish hospitality. A buffet served lobster, shrimp, caviar, and other goodies. I ran the best-stocked bar in Sacramento. And neither I nor my two chief aides, Frank Flynn and Bill Jasper, ever took a drink!

I seldom left the suite during the day, since I didn't want to miss any of the reports that were coming in. I received them not only from my own agents. I also had a crew of vol-

unteers. A clerk here, a secretary there. Such people could be very helpful in picking up bits of information about senators who were planning to change their votes or assemblymen who needed convincing.

Naturally I rewarded these informants in my usual beneficent manner.

Sometimes I went out to dinner, but if important committees were meeting in the evenings, I stayed in the suite, always working in my robe for comfort. Then after I was through with business, I descended to the senate lobby and enjoyed the social intercourse with the legislators, lobbyists, and whoever else might be passing by.

Vigilance was the keynote of the Samish operation.

I had to be aware of what was going on at all times; that was the only way I could properly service my clients. Most of the time I relied on the reports of my staff or of my unofficial army of intelligence agents. On rare occasions I visited the scene of action myself.

One time at the close of a legislative session I was vitally interested in a transportation bill that affected my clients in the trucking industry. I decided to pay a call to the assembly to listen to the debate on the measure.

I stood at the back of the chambers and listened with approval as Bill Hornblower of San Francisco spoke in favor of the bill which he had been helpful enough to introduce. Bill, bless his heart, was the soul of eloquence as he enumerated the merits of the measure.

Then Bill gave the floor to my good friend Charlie Lyons of Los Angeles. To my dismay, I heard Charlie start to castigate the bill.

I couldn't believe my ears. Charlie had already expressed his willingness to support the measure. But then I realized from Charlie's excess of eloquence what was happening. He had enjoyed a couple of nips too many, and he didn't recognize the bill was one that I favored.

I hastily wrote out a note to correct him. An assembly

page delivered the slip of paper. Charlie Lyons glanced hastily at the message and without a second's delay declared to his fellow assemblymen:

"Now that I have told you the bad things about the bill. . . ."

His midstream switch was noticed by no one else but me, and he proceeded to issue a ringing defense of the bill, which passed the assembly with scant opposition.

Booze could sometimes be a problem in the orderly passage of legislation.

On one occasion the assembly was coming up for a vote that was crucial to my clients. I expected the count to be close, and I was relying on the support of an assemblyman who had expressed his willingness to go along with the bill. But as the vote approached, he was nowhere to be found.

"We've got to have him to swing this vote." I said to my assistant, Bill Jasper. "Go find him and bring him to the capitol."

Bill was a reliable fellow, and he hunted for the missing assemblyman in all his favorite haunts, which were mostly bars. Finally Jasper decided to try the fellow's hotel room. Sure enough, there he was, awash in Irish whiskey.

When he saw Jasper, he started crying.

"What's the matter?" Jasper asked.

"It's me uncle," the assemblyman sobbed, the whiskey causing him to speak in a brogue. "One of the foinest monsignors in all of Ireland, he was, and now he's dead."

"I'm very sorry to hear that," said Jasper. "Is there anything we can do with the services?" It was my custom to help bury the departed of any of the legislators.

"No, no, thank ye anyway," said the assemblyman. "There's nithin' we can do for him now. And what a foin broth of a man he was. See here."

He thrust a newspaper clipping toward Jasper. The monsignor was indeed a handsome though stern-looking man, according to his photograph in the Dublin paper. Jasper read the

glowing obituary, and then he happened to notice the date of the clipping. The uncle had died six years before.

Jasper continued to extend his sympathy, but he managed to maneuver the grieving nephew back to the assembly floor in time for the vote.

There were other causes of absenteeism.

At the closing of one legislative session, I had been shepherding a bill through the two houses. Not an important bill, but one which would please a certain client. I had been keeping a close eye on it, simply because I made it a habit not to lose on a bill, important or not.

I felt confident about this particular measure. It had passed the senate with no important opposition. Now it faced the assembly, and my research had shown that I was assured of forty-two votes, two more than were needed for passage.

On the night of the vote, Bill Jasper took a reading on the assemblymen and reported back to me that two important supporters were missing. Let's call them Ernie and Bill.

"Where the hell are those bastards?" I said. "We need them."

I did some sleuthing and found out where Ernie and Bill had gone. They had taken a couple of girls on a voyage of the *Delta Queen*, a steamboat that made an overnight trip between Sacramento and San Francisco.

"I'll get 'em back," I swore, and I sent word to the assembly for a Call of the House. The author of a bill under consideration could make a Call of the House to insure that the present members could not leave while the absent ones were being sought.

I called my friend Bill Dwyer, who ran the *Delta Queen* and the *Delta King*, and he told me the boat's schedule along the Sacramento River. Then I had the sergeant at arms call the highway patrol and tell them to dispatch a couple of officers in a car which would meet the *Delta Queen* at the next drawbridge.

The highway patrolmen arrived in time to board the

steamboat and haul off the two assemblymen. With sirens screaming, the patrol car hurried back to Sacramento where Ernie and Bill cast their affirmative votes for my measure.

Afterward I thanked the two men for interrupting their trysts, and I told them: "I'll have Frank Flynn drive you to San Francisco before the *Delta Queen* docks. I'd hate to have those two girls arrive with no one to greet them."

CHAPTER 13

Some More Examples of How to Get Things Done

CULBERT OLSON DIDN'T GIVE ME ANY TROUBLE AS GOVERNOR. HE was a good man, an honest man, and while I wasn't very close to him, I got along fine with a number of his appointees. His director of finance, George Killion, was an old and good friend of mine.

As I've told you before, it didn't matter to me who was governor. The legislature was the important thing in my method of operation.

Here's a story that will show you how I operated. Parker Maddux, who was president of the San Francisco Bank, came to me with a problem. During the Depression, the bank had foreclosed on a lot of mortgages. The State Banking Act provided that a savings bank had to dispose of its foreclosed property within five years. Now real estate prices were still very low in the 1930s, and the banks would have to dispose of their real estate at depressed rates.

"Under the law, we'll have to get rid of between thirty and forty million dollars' worth of real estate," Maddux told me. "That would mean a substantial loss."

"Do you want the doctor to represent you?" I asked.

"Yes, I do," he said.

So I went to work on his problem. The solution was very simple: one word had to be substituted. All I had to do was change the word "five" to "ten" in the banking law.

I had the entire State Banking Law printed up—it came to a volume big enough to kill a rat with. In amending a law, you have to italicize the amended portion, so the word "ten" appeared in italics. Now you wouldn't expect anybody would be able to find one italicized word in a volume several inches thick. But just in case somebody did, I had the law amended a second time so the "ten" wasn't italicized any more.

The new version sailed through the legislature unanimsly. I can assure you that Mr. Maddux and the San Francisco Bank were very grateful. With the change of one word I saved them about twenty million dollars.

Another of my clients in the 1930s was the American Potash and Chemical Corporation. That was a company that operated a huge plant at Trona, California, for the production of potash and borax.

American Potash hired me to see that there was no severance tax placed on fluid taken from the ground. That could have meant a lot of expense to the company. I spared them that expense. No severance tax was ever voted by the legislature.

I did a few other errands for American Potash, including the securing of a low license plate number for the general manager of the Trona plant. That was just one of my many services.

It wasn't until after World War II that I discovered whom I had been working for. It was revealed that American Potash had been owned by the German government. So my boss all through those years had been Adolf Hitler!

Of course I didn't know it at the time. I was pretty particular whom I worked for. Not everybody could hire the services of Art Samish.

Once a fellow named Preston Tucker came to me. He was a big-time promoter who wanted to get permission to sell interests in his Tucker Corporation to investors in California. But the California Division of Corporations didn't look too kindly on his venture. That's why he tried to enlist Art Samish.

"I'd like to get permission to sell my stock in California," he said to me. "They tell me you're the man who can swing it for me. Will you take on the job?"

I sized this Tucker guy up in a hurry.

"No, I'm not going to take on the job," I told him. "I don't want anything to do with you. I don't like any lovin' stock hustler who goes around selling phony issues to unsuspecting mothers. Why, you might even sell that lovin' stock to my own mother!"

I got rid of him in a hurry. And the California Division of Corporations refused to let him sell the stock. It was a "fraud upon the purchasers," they said.

A couple of others who got the bum's rush from me were the Allen brothers.

Willis and Lawrence Allen had been promoting a pension plan which had the slogan "Thirty Dollars Every Thursday." There were a lot of old, retired folks in California and many of them were hurting financially in the 1930s. So when the Allen brothers came along with the promise of providing the old folks with thirty dollars every Thursday, those people joined the organization.

The Ham 'n' Eggs movement, as it was called, became very powerful in California politics. The Allen brothers got an initiative proposition on the ballot, and they wanted me to help them put it over.

"Get the hell out of my office before I throw you out," I told them. "I don't want nothing to do with a couple of bastards who are taking money from poor mothers so you can get rich!"

The Ham 'n' Eggs initiative lost in the election, I might add.

On another occasion, I had the pleasure of refusing an offer from the mighty showman Cecil B. DeMille.

The director of *The King of Kings*, *The Ten Commandments*, and other epics had cast himself in the role of political martyr. For many years he had appeared on a radio program called *Lux Radio Theater*, for which he was paid \$100,000 a year. One day he received a letter from the radio actors' union asking him to contribute one dollar for a fund to help defeat Proposition 12, which would have forbidden the closed shop in California.

DeMille didn't want to pay.

He found himself in a dilemma. To stay on radio, he had to belong to the American Federation of Radio Artists, which had made the dollar assessment compulsory for all members. But DeMille was also a millionaire and a conservative, and he didn't believe in the closed shop for unions.

DeMille refused to pay the one dollar, and he got thrown out of the union and off the air.

Proposition 12 was defeated, but DeMille wouldn't quit. Through some of his conservative friends, he managed to get a bill before the legislature which would have prohibited the closed shop in California. That's when I entered the picture.

One of my acquaintances at the racetracks was a successful Beverly Hills lawyer. DeMille was one of his clients, and the lawyer was helping him promote his antiunion measure.

The lawyer telephoned me to enlist my help.

"Art, you've got to do this for us," he said. "If this bill doesn't pass, we'll hold you personally responsible."

That kind of language didn't work with Art Samish.

"No one gives me ultimatums," I told him. "Now let's see you try to get that lovin' bill through."

The labor unions had just about given up hope of beating the bill. But that was before I decided to give them a helping hand. Suddenly legislators the DeMille forces had counted on for support had second thoughts. The assembly

voted the bill down, fifty-four votes out of eighty being registered against it.

That was the biggest victory the unions had ever known in the legislature. C. J. (Neil) Haggerty, who represented the American Federation of Labor in Sacramento and later became the AFL lobbyist in Washington and a regent of the University of California, gave me the nod.

"This ought to show who controls the state of California," said Haggerty.

Time after time I helped Neil get what he wanted in the legislature, including workmen's compensation. I was always for the working stiff. I told my staff, "They're the ones who buy our beer."

Sometimes my rich clients would complain because I helped labor.

"What the hell's the matter?" I replied. "Are you afraid your stockholders are going to get a nickel less in dividends? Share it with the people who buy your product!"

My services for labor were rendered without charge. That's the way I operated: those who could afford to pay for Art Samish would do so—and pay dearly. Those who couldn't—hell, I worked for nothing, if it was for someone or something I believed in.

Paul Smith was a good friend of mine. He was a brilliant man and a fine newspaperman; he was editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. One day he called me up and asked me: "Can you get a resolution for One World through the legislature?"

"What the hell is One World?" I asked.

He explained that it was something Wendell Willkie had started. It concerned a world federalist union or some damned thing. I didn't know what it was all about, but if Paul Smith believed in it, that was good enough for me.

The One World resolution went through the legislature without a word against it. California became the first state in the nation to favor a world federalist union.

I did a lot of other jobs that nobody ever heard about. Back in my early days in Sacramento the lobbyist for the University of California was Robert Gordon Sproul, who later became president of the university. He was succeeded by Luther Nichols. Both of them were fine, upstanding men, and they sometimes had trouble getting the legislature to appropriate enough money so the university could grow into the great institution it is today. I gave them help whenever they needed it, and I didn't ask anything in return.

There were many things like that that I did for people. Somehow those things never got written up in the Philbrick Report or magazine articles about Art Samish. Not that I gave a good goddam.

Just one more example and then I'll quit telling you what a nice man I really am.

I came across a letter in my desk drawer the other day. It was from my old and dear friend Marco Hellman, one of the great civic leaders of San Francisco. He told me he had come across a book of interviews conducted by the University of California School of Public Health.

A man named Lawrence Arnstein was telling about the trouble in getting legislation for child care centers. Neil Haggerty of the AFL told Arnstein that the only man who could get the bill through the legislature was Art Samish. Arnstein arranged an appointment with me through Sam Lilienthal, the head of a grocery chain.

This is what Arnstein told about our meeting:

"He turned out to be a man who used to come into our woolen business. When I saw him I said, 'Are you the man who used to come in to Arnstein, Simon and Company to buy clothes from Freddy Pratt?' He said, 'Yes; are you the man who was head of that business?' I said, 'Yes.'

"He said, 'What did you want to see me about?' I told him I wanted to see him about the child care center bill, because

it was held up by Senators Swing and Hatfield and we needed their votes.

"He said, 'I'll see what I can do.' I said, 'Don't you want me to tell you what the child care centers mean to the Community Chest and the PTA and the League of Women Voters and the labor unions and everybody I'm working with?'

"No,' he said. 'I don't care about that. As long as Sam Lilienthal wants me to do it, and you who used to be in business are doing this for nothing, I'll see what I can do for the kids.'

"Next day the bill came out of committee. He certainly did a good deed for the child care centers, because if it had been killed in the Senate Finance Committee, it would have been dead permanently. Since that time, the centers have become permanent."

Marco Hellman added: "Mr. Arnstein told me that the child care centers now take care of 350,000 children. I thought this would be of interest to you."

CHAPTER 14

How I Ran the Best-selling Whiskey Out of California; and Other Adventures with Lewis Rosenstiel

A LOBBYIST'S LIFE IS FULL OF SURPRISES. ONE DAY I WAS SURPRISED to get a telephone call from a Mr. Lewis Rosenstiel in New York. Now I didn't know anybody named Lewis Rosenstiel, but I was willing to talk business with anyone. I soon learned who Mr. Rosenstiel was, and we ended up doing a whole lot of business together. A whole lot.

When I went to work for a client, I found out everything I could about him. What I learned about Lewis Rosenstiel was impressive. He had been born in Cincinnati in 1891 and at the age of seventeen went to work sweeping the floor of his uncle's distillery in Kentucky. Naturally the liquor business was ruined during Prohibition, but Rosenstiel knew that liquor would be legal again and he planned accordingly. He bought an unused distillery in Schenley, Pennsylvania, at a bargain price. Other distillers didn't want the expense of holding onto their stocks of whiskey, so Rosenstiel bought up their supplies, again at bargain rates. This was a real smart fellow.

When Repeal came in 1933, Rosenstiel's Schenley company was in the best position of any distiller. He had more aged

whiskey than any of them, and Schenley's profits were enormous.

But Lewis Rosenstiel wanted more profits, and that's why he called me.

"Mr. Samish, I'm very much concerned about that Anti-discrimination Law in California," he said. "It could be very damaging to our profit structure in your state. Do you think anything can be done about it?"

"Mr. Rosenstiel, you came to the right man," I told him.

The law he was concerned about had been enacted to protect California wines and other beverages. It provided that if other states levied special taxes on California wines and liquors, California would reciprocate with taxes on those states' wines and liquors.

I saw to it that the law was changed so Schenley products would not suffer. Mr. Rosenstiel was pleased and impressed, and he hired me as public relations counselor for Schenley. I was paid \$36,000 a year, plus \$18,000 a year from California Vineyards, which he owned.

But it was more than a business arrangement. Lewis Rosenstiel and I became close friends. I mean close. So close that he sent me the key to his house and said it was open to me at all times. I staged birthday parties for him. I knew all four of his wives. One of them was the niece of Harry Cohn; she had been married to Beldon Kattleman and later became the wife of Walter Annenberg, Ambassador to Great Britain.

I was so close to Lewis Rosenstiel that I was convinced he would never desert me. That was a mistake.

I performed a great many services for Rosenstiel. During the war when cigarettes were scarce, I convinced him to give away packages of cigarettes to soldiers. On each package was the statement, "Compliments of the Schenley Company." Thirty thousand packs of cigarettes a month were given to servicemen, and a lot of friendship was generated for Schenley.

Schenley went into the wine business in a big way in 1940,

and I was responsible for it. I made it my business to find out everything that was happening in the beverage industry. One day I heard that Lucien Johnson was sick. He was the man who ran Cresta Blanca, a fine old company that dated back to the earliest days of California wineries. With the war going on in Europe, I knew that there would be a demand for domestic wines.

Here's how the rest of the story was related in *Fortune* magazine:

The fact that the unaggressive Johnson was ailing and open to offers was known to, among others, Arthur Samish, No. 1 California lobbyist, retained by Rosenstiel to handle Schenley's public relations on the West Coast. Figuring that Schenley Import, the company's high-toned subsidiary, would soon have trouble importing anything, Samish had what he terms "a fool idea." He called his client and asked, "How'd you like to buy your company a winery?"

Rosenstiel was not taken aback. Unlike most distillers, he is voraciously interested in everything from chemistry to a corporation's social obligations. Long enthusiastic about finding byproducts and sidelines, he told Samish to organize his thoughts and call him the next day. Samish got an option from Johnson and did so.

"How'd you like to own Cresta Blanca and the eight gold medals?" he said.

"What the hell are you talking about?" asked Rosenstiel, who had never heard of them. Samish had hardly explained before he was flying east with the option. Schenley bought Cresta Blanca for \$280,000.

That purchase put quality California wines on the map. There had been a lot of cheap wine on the market, but the good wines had not received much national attention.

Rosenstiel spent two million dollars making Cresta Blanca a famous brand. He put on a coast-to-coast radio program on which the words Cresta Blanca were spelled out with a musical accompaniment. The other distilleries took notice. National Distillers bought Italian Swiss Colony, Seagram bought Paul Masson, Hiram Walker bought Valliant and Son. So enthusiastic about wine was Lew Rosenstiel that he then shelled out \$6,400,000 for Roma, the biggest wine producer in California.

California had the Gold Rush in 1849. The Wine Rush came in 1940-1942. And I'm the guy who started it.

Another service I performed for Lewis Rosenstiel never got written up in *Fortune* or any other publication. That was The 10 High Caper.

One day I received a telephone call from Rosenstiel in New York. "Artie, I've got something important on my mind that I want to discuss with you," he said. "Come back here."

Well, when the big man calls, the little man jumps. So I grabbed a plane and went to New York to confer with Mr. Rosenstiel.

I met him at his office, and he said to me, "Artie, I'm very much concerned about Harry Hatch."

"You mean the president of Hiram Walker?" I said.

"Yes. He's a mean man. I'd like to see something done about him."

"What would you suggest?"

"Well, he has a whiskey called 10 High, and it's the biggest seller in California."

"Tell me something about it."

"It's a thirty-six-month-old whiskey . . ."

"That's all I need to know. You leave it to me—I'll take care of Mr. Harry Hatch."

On the plane going back to California I figured out my strategy. When the legislature came back into session, I had one of my friends in the assembly introduce a bill which pro-

vided that all whiskies sold in the state of California had to be at least four years old and all blends had to be at least 20 percent four years old.

I shepherded that bill through the legislature in my usual manner. First it was referred to the Assembly Committee on Public Morals, where it was passed unanimously. I guided it carefully through the second and third readings and then the passage by the assembly. Then the same process was repeated in the senate.

The bill zipped through the legislature without a whisper of opposition. Governor Olson vetoed it, but his veto was overridden. The Drys loved the bill; for once I had them on my side. They'd vote for anything that curtailed the liquor industry. The others thought it was a good bill because it protected the quality of whiskey.

After all, I was looking out for the public's interest. It just happened that the public's interest coincided with that of Lewis Rosenstiel.

I didn't learn until later that Schenley owned the great bulk of four-year-old whiskey in the United States.

So 10 High was run out of California, which then was consuming 27 percent of the nation's whiskey; 10 High returned later in a different form, but by that time it had lost all its prestige in California.

CHAPTER 15

How I Kept the California Liquor Industry Honest, Happy, and Healthy

WHILE I WAS PERFORMING ERRANDS FOR MR. LEWIS ROSENSTIEL, I was also watching over the interests of the entire liquor industry. And if I do say so myself, I was doing a bang-up job.

A few years ago there was a seminar on alcohol at UCLA, and a professor from the Yale University Institute for Alcoholic Studies gave out the statement that California has the best liquor laws in the nation.

That was no accident. I myself put through all those laws. Not only that. I saw that they were enforced, too.

By God, I did such a good job that I even had the WCTU on my side!

As long as I was running things for the brewers, they remained in financial health. If you don't believe me, consider then and now.

Then—the standard price for a six-pack of beer was \$1.20.

Now—you can buy a six-pack of beer in California for \$1.10. Everyone knows how the costs of labor, materials, and taxes have risen, so you can see how much less profit the brewers are making.

Then—there were sixteen local breweries in California.

Now—only two remain. All the others have gone broke or have been taken over by the eastern companies. And many of the big companies have been hurting, too.

I operated on the theory that only by regulation and enforcement could the alcoholic beverage business thrive and prosper. Cutthroat competition could have been ruinous. So I put through the fair-trade laws to protect wholesalers, distributors, and retailers. All of them make a profit in California, and they always have.

But look what happens in states that don't have fair trade. New York, for instance. When the fair-trade laws were in effect there, a liquor license could have been worth \$250,000. Then the state removed fair trade and the license is worth virtually nothing. The liquor business started competing so fiercely that it was tough for anyone to make a profit.

Then there's another problem that other states have: moonshining.

What causes illegal stills? High taxes on liquor. Many of the states, particularly in the South, taxed liquor so heavily that moonshining became an industry. Not in California. I kept the taxes so low that illegal stills became as rare as Hollywood virgins.

I kept an eye on everything and left no loophole unplugged. One year Bill Jasper had driven up to Sacramento with a friend, and he told me of stopping at a roadside stand in Kern County. The place had a big sign in front that advertised: "Eastside Beer on Tap."

Jasper's friend ordered a beer and had to spit it out. When he asked about the beer, the waitress told him it wasn't really Eastside; the boss just tapped whatever he had on hand and in this case it was an inferior brand.

"That's very naughty of him," I said to Jasper. "We can't have that sort of thing going on in this state."

And so I had a law passed to change that practice. The

spigot on every barrel of tap beer had to carry the name of the beer that was contained therein. California was the first state to pass such a law, and virtually every state in the Union followed suit. Canada, too.

You know those miniature bottles of liquor that you can buy for souvenirs? I love them. I've got what may be the largest collection of miniature liquor bottles in the world—six thousand of them.

But though I like to collect them myself, I know that those tiny liquor bottles are not good for the industry. They can get into the hands of minors too easily. Girls can hide them in their purses, boys can slip them in their pockets. So I had them banned from California.

I convinced the industry it was good business to keep liquor from minors. The rules against sales of intoxicating beverages to those under the age of twenty-one were clearly spelled out and rigidly enforced. On occasion a friend of mine would call me to report that a bar owner had been caught serving drinks to minors. Could I do anything for the man?

"Let the son of a bitch go to jail!" I replied.

That was my attitude toward any request for leniency from the law enforcers.

"Artie, I've got a problem," a tavern owner would tell me. "The Board of Equalization man came around at two thirty in the morning and he saw my bartender serving drinks. Can you fix it for me?"

"No!" I'd tell him. "You can sue the clock company if the clock showed before two and it was really two thirty."

Never once did I intercede with the liquor law enforcers for any of my fifty thousand clients.

I took pride in those laws. I passed through a bill that assured that liquor could not be sold in "close proximity" to schools and churches. The "close proximity" was left in general terms because each case had to be considered individually. For instance, you couldn't deny a liquor license to the Biltmore

Hotel in Los Angeles because the Unitarian Church was across the street. But in general the law was applied wisely to prevent bars and liquor stores from being too close to schools and places of worship.

I mentioned about the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

We got along fine. More often than not, the laws which I advocated and pushed through the legislature were also favored by the Temperance ladies. The WCTU had a lobbyist in Sacramento during the legislature sessions, and I always maintained good relations with the representative.

One time the WCTU lobbyist asked me if I couldn't get a job for her husband.

"Why, certainly, dear lady," I told her. And her husband soon found employment as an investigator for the Greyhound Lines.

The lady was most appreciative, and we became even closer friends. One stormy day she was complaining about her health. "I don't like this rain," she remarked. "It chills me to the bones. I lie awake at night and shiver."

"What you need," I told her, "is a little taste of brandy before retiring."

"Brandy?" she said. "That's liquor, isn't it?"

"Some may think so. I consider it medicinal."

"In that case—I might try it."

I went to the liquor store at Tenth and K streets and bought a bottle of Martell brandy and presented it to her. The next day she told me, "My, that certainly did the trick." Every ten days for the rest of the legislative session I had one of my secretaries supply her with another bottle of brandy.

My work in California did not go without the notice of the liquor industry in the rest of the land. On occasion I was consulted for problems elsewhere, but I must admit that I was not too successful in operating outside of my native state.

The reason for this was strictly personal. California was my territory. I ran things the way I wanted. When I went outside the state, I suddenly found myself confronted with committees and conferences and all manner of pussyfooting that corporations and associations fall victim to.

I am reminded of an industry function at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. I was invited to attend and give counsel at a conference at which high members of the liquor industry were discussing their mutual problems.

For five hours I listened as the talk went back and forth about this problem and that. Finally the chairman turned to me and said, "Mr. Samish, do you mind saying what you think of our ideas? Do you have anything that would add to our discussion?"

I rose to my feet and gazed over the gathering of well-groomed, handsomely attired executives.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I have to be honest in my beliefs and conclusions as to what you have been discussing here today. I don't expect to be very popular with what I am going to tell you. But you asked for it.

"I have summed up this little gathering as a group of pompous brown-noses osculating the posteriors of your bosses. You are afraid that something might be advanced which would cut you off from a payroll. No work is being done."

Attendance at that meeting convinced me to resist any overtures to extend my activities to a national level. I was thoroughly content to restrict myself to the state I knew as well as any man alive.

My knowledge of the state and its beverage industry helped further the financial fortunes of Arthur H. Samish. On occasion I not only served the industry; I became a part of it.

On one occasion I got mad at Lewis Rosenstiel and I decided to show him a lesson. Through my contacts in the liquor business, I heard that National Distributor Brands was up for

sale. That was a liquor company that distributed some of the best-selling whiskeys—including Rosenstiel's hated competitors—from San Jose to San Francisco.

I bought the company and renamed it Better Brands. I did a hell of a business and gave Schenley some tough competition in the Bay Area. Then I sold out to Seagram's at a handsome profit.

On another occasion I heard that the distributorship for Anheuser-Busch was up for grabs in San Francisco and Santa Clara counties. I went back to St. Louis and had a grand time being entertained by Anheuser and Busch. When I came back to California, I had the distributorship in my pocket. They gave it to me.

I sold their beer for a few years and made a nice piece of change. Then one day Gussie Busch called me from the Mark Hopkins Hotel and said he wanted to see me. I went over to see him and sold him back the franchise. Besides the profits I had earned, I pocketed a tidy \$75,000 for my efforts.

Success in the liquor business is due in large part to the people you know, and I knew everybody. I knew more people in the state of California than any man alive.

One of my great and good friends was George Stout, the state liquor administrator of California. But don't get the wrong idea. George was a very honorable, straightforward, classy, decent kind of a guy. A real gentleman. He advised me on a number of things, and I gave him my counsel, too.

But I never asked him for any favors. I expected him to administer the liquor laws without preference to anyone—and he did.

George Stout was a sweetheart. In 1949, he was the host of the annual National Conference of State Liquor Administrators when they had their convention in San Francisco. He invited me to address his fellow members, and I was pleased to do so.

I told the distinguished visitors that it was high time that

the alcoholic beverage industry of America "embark upon a campaign of offense to insure its perpetuation as an integral part of the economic and social life in America."

I explained how the professional Drys had brought every screwball and fanatic they could hire or subsidize into California for an all-out drive for Prohibition. How we secured a half-million signatures to place an opposing proposition on the ballot. How the big boys paid the bills and the little fellows did the work. How we carried the message to the public in every newspaper and on every radio station in the state of California. How we took over billboards and passed out handbills to warn against the Prohibition threat. And how we won the fight overwhelmingly.

"I think our public relations organizations must be something more than a fire department called in to put out a fire already started," I said. "We must not wait until we have been attacked to tell the public that our industry is a true cross section of the American religious, social, and economic life."

In outlining our own aggressive policies for the industry in California, I delivered my basic platform:

1. A reasonable margin of profit
2. A good night's sleep
3. Doors open in the morning
4. Impartial but just enforcement of all laws and regulations without favor to any individual.

At that time there were rumors in the trade that I was being considered as a top advisor in the national industry. I replied to that:

"Right here and now I want to go on record that I am very happy here in California. I am not interested in the best apartment on Park Avenue and all that goes with it. I say as emphatically as I can that I want no part of directing national policy.

"I hope this assertion will destroy once and forever any

report anyone may have heard in the past or may hear in the future that I am trying to play coy about accepting an invitation to go East. The industry is a big army and has enough brass hats. What we need is more people willing to do a job."

Just to emphasize my point, I closed with this statement:

"I'm sorry I won't be here to listen to the golden-tongued orators of the industry expound their paucity of ideas in a diarrhea of words. I'm sorry I won't be here to listen to butter-mouthed representatives of the bosses attempt to justify their junket to the Golden Gate.

"I really would like to hear their sycophantic fawning; their veiled insinuations; their oblique references to my remarks today.

"I am going back to Sacramento where the legislature is now meeting to do the best job I can for our California industry and our California people."

CHAPTER 16

Personal Notes Concerning Arthur H. Samish, Esq.

THE 1940s WERE BUSY YEARS FOR YOURS TRULY. MERCED AND I had two beautiful homes, one in San Francisco and a big spread down the peninsula. We had parties for two hundred, three hundred people, and I'd really put on a show for those folks. Always my dear mother was at the parties, and she loved to have people around.

When the legislature was in session, my home was Room 428 of the Senator Hotel, right across the street from the capitol. I had a big suite, and the icebox was always full of steaks and beer. I arose about eleven in the morning and studied reports from my staff about what was going on that day. There were about ten of them, and I'd give them their assignments.

Throughout the day and evening, they reported in to me and I'd be on the phone with clients and contacts all over the state. All over the country, in fact.

By eleven in the evening I finished my work and I went downstairs to the lobby of the Senator. There I'd be available to all comers until 4 A.M. If a senator had a problem with his campaign for reelection, I'd figure out how to help him. An

assemblyman might stop by to ask my opinion about a piece of legislation. Judges, commissioners, cops, secretaries, reporters, clerks—I'd talk to them all. Bookies, too. I always kept a wad of bills in my pocket, just in case I had a hunch on a football game or a horse race.

I'd chat with my fellow lobbyists, men like Walter Little, who represented the railroads; Vince Kennedy of the retailers; Charlie Stevens, who lobbied for oil; Elmer Bromley, the power companies; Lynn Peterson, the American Legion and Eastside Brewery; Bob McKay, the teachers. They were all my buddies, and I'd give them advice when they asked for it.

We had a hell of a lot of fun. Every year I handed out membership cards to the other lobbyists. I figured we should be organized, just like everyone else. So I printed up cards that read:

California State Federation of Labor
— A.F. of L. —

This is to certify that

is a member in good standing of
LOBBYIST UNION NO. 1
for the regular session
of the California Legislature

The card was signed by Arthur H. Samish, President, and C. J. Haggerty, Chairman of the Executive Committee. Haggerty actually was the lobbyist for the AFL, and he went along with the gag.

On the other side of the card I had printed:

OUR SLOGAN

Government of the People, by the People, for
the People, and with the People's Money

OUR AIM

To make the rich poor and the poor rich, di-
vide the wealth and multiply income, tax the
untaxed and untax the taxed, add the surtax
and subtract the mistax, an acre of beans for
every family and a garage to store them in
sacks supplied by the State.

At the end of every legislative session we put on the legislative ball. The thirty-five biggest lobbyists in Sacramento contributed \$100 apiece to put it on, but it was really my baby. I had Kent Redwine, who lobbied for the movie studios, send a bunch of stars up from Hollywood to put on the entertainment. The ball was held in the Governor's Hall at the state fairgrounds.

All forty senators and eighty assemblymen attended with their wives. The governor and the heads of departments were invited, too. And Art Samish had charge of the seating arrangements. Those who were friends got ringside seats in front of the entertainment. Those who had failed to display their friendship found themselves seated behind a potted palm.

During the war I pulled a stunt which gave me a lot of satisfaction.

You'll remember that liquor was in short supply during the war. This made it tough on soldiers and sailors who might have weekend passes and wanted drinks to have parties with. They

often ended up paying black market prices or buying rotgut because they couldn't find good liquor.

So I established Military Bottle Shops. One was right in the Senator Hotel in Sacramento, three in Oakland, one at Vallejo near the Marine base, one in San Francisco, a couple in Los Angeles. Only military personnel could buy bottles, and they paid the regular price, nothing extra.

How did I get the liquor in those rationed times? I got it. I told the distillers they had to supply cases. If they didn't come through, I'd advertise to the trade that they weren't cooperating. They came through.

The stores stayed open only from five to eight in the evening, and the soldiers and sailors would be lined up around the block to get in. The other liquor stores squawked like stuck turkeys, but that didn't bother me any. I wasn't making any money from the shops.

I gave the management of the shops to deserving people. The president of the Military Bottle Shop at Tenth and K streets in Sacramento was Tony the newsboy. A fine young man, Tony. He was devoted to his mother, who worked in a cannery to help support them—Tony was crippled. After I gave him the shop, his mother was able to quit her job, and she and Tony were set up for life.

There were others, too. Frances the chambermaid, who had taken such good care of me when I was sick at the Senator Hotel. Harry Hansen, who had been fired by McKesson and Robbins. Walter King, my pianist—I gave him a shop in Oakland.

I used those Military Bottle Shops for public relations. I remembered how the Prohis had used the First World War to make the country go dry. Each shop featured copies of news stories about bootlegger wars with the slogan "It Can't Happen Here." And each soldier and sailor was asked to sign a sheet with the following statement:

"We the undersigned members of the Armed Forces ex-

press our appreciation to distillers and wholesalers cooperating in maintaining this fair-price source exclusively for the benefit of servicemen. We trust our purchases of alcoholic beverages may continue and will not be prevented by any Prohibition Law."

When the legislature wasn't in session, I was traveling a great deal of the time. I loved to move around the country, see new places, make new friends. It was good business for me, too. My interests weren't confined to the state of California; it paid for me to know businessmen and politicians elsewhere.

Wherever I went, I liked to have fun and frolic around me. That's why I often took Walter King along. Walter was master of the piano, and he could liven up a convention of undertakers. Walter never knew what to expect when I gave him a call. One day I told him to bring his whole band to the airport at San Francisco. When he and his seven musicians arrived there, I told them we were going to Alaska. The governor was having a shindig, and I wanted them to supply the music. We had a great couple of days up there.

My travels during those years took me all over. To Florida, where I stayed with Joe Schenck. To Hot Springs, Arkansas, for the baths. To Louisville for the Kentucky Derby.

I spent a great deal of time in New York, visiting Lewis Rosenstiel and other eastern clients. I even dabbled a bit in New York politics. Some of the liquor interests asked me if I could help the campaign of William O'Dwyer for Mayor. I was glad to. I gave him some advice on how to raise money and how to conduct the campaign. After the election I visited him at Gracie Mansion, and he expressed his gratitude.

I enjoyed the night life in New York City, and one of the places I frequented was the Copacabana. Jack Entratter, who ran the place, became a good friend, and I decided to help him out. Like every other night club during the war, the Copa was having trouble getting liquor. I saw to it that five hundred cases of I. W. Harper bourbon were delivered to the Copa.

There was one thing people couldn't understand about me. Here I represented the liquor industry and I was around parties all the time. But I never took a drop myself.

That wasn't always so.

When liquor was forbidden during Prohibition, I decided I needed it. I tossed down quite a few gallons of sour mash whiskey in my day. I drank because I liked to drink. No other reason.

But when liquor became legal again, I quit drinking. I'll tell you how it happened.

Tom Wilson, who was president of the Alaska Steamship Company, had a job he wanted me to do. It seems the United States government had appropriated some money to build a new ship to supply Alaska. Tom didn't want the competition. He asked me if I could do something about it.

I decided to go up there and look over the situation. So Doc Winkelman and I took one of Tom's ships up to Juneau, and we had a great time. We flew over to look at the glaciers, and I bought a camera and took pictures over everything in sight. I took more goddam pictures of those big dogs up there than you can imagine.

I also did some work for Tom Wilson. I calculated the number of ships that went in and out of Juneau and the other Alaskan ports, and the total indicated that more shipping wasn't needed. We sent a man off to Washington with the information, and the government changed its mind about appropriating money for a ship.

The time came for Doc and me to leave Alaska, and we decided to have a party on shipboard for all the friends we had made. Oh, it was a wild one. Tom Wilson was sailing back to San Francisco with us, and he brought to the party the governor's grass-widow daughter that he was sweet on. I was pretty damn stiff, and I pinched her cheek so hard that it left a black-and-blue mark. Tom was so mad that he wouldn't talk to me or Doc all the way back to San Francisco.

That's when I decided to quit drinking.

After I got home, I went to the Russian River near San Francisco Bay to sort of rest up. I took Walter King along, and he played the accordion while we canoed down the river drinking beer. I've never had a taste of alcohol since. Never missed it, either.

I quit smoking, too.

I used to smoke three or four packs of cigarettes a day. Then one day I was having trouble breathing, and I went to see Dr. Joe Zeiler. He examined me and said, "Art, you've got to cut down on the cigarettes."

"I can't cut down," I said.

"Well, you've got to, or your health is going to suffer."

"Okay, Doc," I said. I took the pack of cigarettes from my pocket and sailed it out the window. That was forty years ago, and I haven't had a puff since.

For about twenty years I had a Christmas ritual that I organized and carried out by myself. It took place at San Quentin.

I felt sympathy for the prisoners. I always used to say that the only difference between them and us is that they got caught.

Every Christmas I'd get together a truckload of goodies. I'd have thousands of cigarettes, cigars, candies, phonograph records, miniature photographs I had bought myself in Europe, turkeys, and other kinds of treats for the prisoners. I took along Walter King to play the piano, and maybe a magician or a comedian or a tap dancer to entertain. Also movies of the latest prizefights.

My caravan started out for San Quentin early in the morning, and we stayed all day, handing out treats to the prisoners, entertaining them, and even conducting a crap game or two.

When the day was over, I insisted that everyone leave the hall but the inmates. Then I told them they could write out any message to someone on the outside, and I would see that it was

telegraphed that day. I hoped that they would send Christmas greetings to their mothers. But it didn't matter. They could send the message to someone else they loved—or hated. Either way, I would get the message through, and only I would read it.

After the party, I went back to my office in San Francisco and had the messages typed up for the telegraph office.

I always had a concern for the unfortunates in prison, and I visited other penitentiaries as well. I remember one time when I was looking around at Folsom, and I stopped to get a shoeshine from one of the colored prisoners.

Along came a big, red-faced guard, and he started bawling the bejesus out of the prisoner and calling him all kinds of bad names.

"Just a minute, my good fellow," I said to the guard, "there's no reason to talk so rudely to this gentleman."

"You keep outa this," the guard shouted. "This is between me and this stinkin' nigger."

"I don't like to hear that kind of talk," I insisted.

"Yeah? Whadda ya gonna do about it?"

What I did about it was to go back to Sacramento and look up the appropriation for penal institutions in the state budget. That guard's salary was stricken from the budget.

CHAPTER 17

The Warren Years Bring Continued Prosperity to the Art Samish Enterprises

IN 1942 CULBERT OLSON WAS DEFEATED FOR GOVERNOR BY EARL Warren, and that was all right with me. I was on Warren's side. I had known him since he was clerk of the Judiciary Committee, and I was just a little shaver in Sacramento. I followed his career as district attorney of Alameda County and as attorney general of California. He was a decent sort, with a pleasant smile and a hearty handshake. Earl was ambitious. But then show me the politician who isn't.

As governor, Earl Warren didn't give me any trouble, and I didn't trouble him. As a matter of fact, I would pitch in and help him when I could. Like when he tried to raise the gasoline tax so the state could build new highways. Naturally the oil lobby put up a terrific fight on that one. I helped the governor push the gasoline tax through.

Earl and I didn't always agree, and one time he vetoed a bill that I had been promoting.

"What's wrong with the bill, Governor," I asked him.

Warren gave a detailed analysis of his objections to it.

"All right, Governor," I told him, "if that's the way you feel about it, I'll give you another bill."

So I whipped up another version of the same bill and had it passed by the legislature and placed on the governor's desk for him to sign. Which he did.

Warren had it easy during the war years. California was booming with war plants and military bases, and the governor could play the hero by reducing taxes and still run up a surplus. He was so popular that he won both the Republican and Democratic primaries in 1946 and ran unopposed in the final election, the only governor in history to do so. That was a neat trick when you consider that Warren was a Republican and the majority of California voters were Democrats.

The Warren years were busy ones for Art Samish and his multifarious enterprises. Some of my assignments were extremely interesting.

Once I had the state of Nevada for a client. At least I presumed the state of Nevada was hiring me; I never asked questions like that. This big lawyer from Reno came to me, a man named Woodburn, and he said he was concerned about a proposed law that would have made it easier to get married in California. At that time there was a two-day wait, and the couple had to get blood tests and go through a lot of red tape. But if the same couple went to Nevada, they could get married right away. The Nevada wedding industry would have been ruined by the proposed bill.

I'm a man who believes in the sanctity of marriage. If the California law made quickie weddings more difficult, I was in favor of it. The proposed change in the marriage law was defeated. The state of Nevada—or whoever paid my fee—was extremely grateful.

Another of my clients was Philip Morris. I not only took good care of it, but the entire cigarette industry as well.

How? By keeping the cigarette tax out of California.

Three governors tried to convince the legislature to institute a cigarette tax. At one time Governor Warren argued that forty-one other states in the nation taxed cigarettes. But he

wasn't able to sell the legislature. As long as I represented Philip Morris, California never had a cigarette tax.

Sometimes I didn't get paid for assignments. Take the Stoneson deal. This fellow named Stoneson presented me with his problem: he had a big piece of real estate which he wanted to develop for a huge shopping center south of San Francisco on the ocean side. But the state of California also had its eyes on the property and had started proceedings to condemn it for a college.

"I'll see what I can do," I told Mr. Stoneson.

It wasn't a pushover assignment, because the state was dead set on having the property for the college. When the time came for a vote on the bill, one legislator just happened to be absent. The bill died. Poor bill.

And so Stonestown was able to develop it into a shopping center worth millions of dollars. And how much did Artie earn for his efforts?

Not a dime.

Mr. Stoneson died shortly after the vote in the legislature. I hadn't asked for a retainer, but had expected to be paid after the job was done. I didn't fret over it.

There were a lot of times when I performed my wiles for no reward whatsoever. For instance . . .

One year a move was under way to legalize dog racing in California. Since none of my clients was involved, I didn't give a damn whether they raced horses, dogs, or mice in the state. But a lot of powerful people did.

One of them was my old friend Charlie Strub of Santa Anita. He was scared those doggies were going to cut into his take, and he wanted to make sure that the bill didn't pass. But he didn't know how to go about it because he knew I was mad at him. So he sent an intermediary.

Joe Schenck, who was the head of Twentieth Century-Fox, asked me one day: "How would you like a big diamond?"

"Now what would I want with a big diamond?" I asked.

"Doc Strub wants to give you one."

"He does, does he?"

"Yes, Artie. He wants you to do something about that dog-racing bill."

"You can tell Doc Strub what he can do with his diamond."

"Yes, I know you don't like him. But it isn't only the race-tracks that don't want dog racing, Artie. The picture business doesn't want it, either. It would keep people away from the theaters."

"Are you telling me that *you* don't want that dog-racing bill passed, Joe?"

"That's right, Artie."

"Then that sheds a different light on the matter."

I need not add that dog racing never became legal in California.

Such assignments were mere diversions in the life of a lobbyist. My base of operations remained the brewers and the liquor industry. They paid me handsomely, and I served them well.

I kept track of everything. All the liquor ads in the state came across my desk. If I found anything that I thought would reflect ill on the liquor industry, I had the advertisement killed. I watched all the newspapers in California. When I found evidence that the liquor industry was being poorly treated in the news columns and editorials, I lodged a protest. If the offenses continued, I pulled out the Schenley ads and any others I could influence.

My kind of operation required complete cooperation. For instance, the billboards. They were an important part of our campaigns for legislators and ballot propositions. Most of the industry gladly provided the use of the billboards during election campaigns. But there were a few backsliders. In those cases, I had photographs taken of the billboards which were not made available, and I circulated those photographs to all members of the industry. The holdouts came through.

They realized I was watching out for their best interests. There could be no doubt of it. One of my lawyers, Emile Hoerchner, counsel for the Brewers Institute, wrote every liquor law passed in the state of California.

Maintaining such control required a friendly atmosphere in the legislature. How did I achieve such friendliness? That gets us back to the Samish System of Politics:

Select and Elect.

CHAPTER 18

In Which I Reveal for the First Time the Samish Technique of Selecting and Electing

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE FIVE-CENT FUND.

That was my base of operations, and what a sweet, lovin' thing it was! The brewers slapped that five-cent assessment on every barrel of beer that was brewed in the state of California, and they handed it over to Artie to do with as he saw fit.

I did right by them. I put their nickels to good use. They never questioned what I did with the fund, and I never told them. All they had to know about was the results. And when the industry isn't taxed, even when the state is going deeply into debt as it did some years, then you know that the Keeper of the Fund is providing results.

The selection of candidates was something I didn't leave to chance.

I told you about the black books I kept on every candidate. I mean I had everything about a politician in his book—the names of his clubs and fraternities, whether he liked Scotch or bourbon, his religion, family life, hobbies, and so forth. One of my secretaries did nothing else but clip and file newspaper stories which included every public utterance of every legis-

lator and candidate for the legislature in the state of California. I included absolutely everything, including whether a man had been arrested for anything, even a traffic violation.

The black book was my Bible. It told me just how to proceed with each lawmaker, where his strong and weak points were, how he could be approached on matters concerning the interests of my clients.

Mainly, I depended on my Gestapo to feed me information. I couldn't be everywhere, and indeed, some weeks I scarcely stirred from my headquarters, Samish Alley in the Hotel Senator. The detail work was carried out by my staff, those bright and attentive people who attended legislative and committee sessions and reported back to me. When I had messages to impart to certain senators and assemblymen, I often sent them via my trusted aides, Frank Flynn and Bill Jasper. They performed ably as my pipelines to the capitol. They knew my desires so well that they could make field decisions by themselves. But the major policy could be set by myself alone.

The one great essential for my mode of operation was to see that the right candidates got elected.

This fellow Rusco who wrote his Ph.D. dissertation about me said in his paper: "Samish conducted his candidate campaigns with a degree of organization and sophistication which overshadowed the efforts of partisan organizations in the two decades in question [1930-1950]. He had better financing and a statewide plan of action, and he probably employed more experienced campaigners on a year-in, year-out basis than either of the major parties."

I can't argue with that. I did have a hell of an organization. The Republicans and the Democrats had nothing. The Hiram Johnson system of cross-filing and nonpartisan local elections kept party activity at a minimum. Every candidate was on his own. He needed help wherever he could get it. And he got it from Art Samish—provided the candidate had been selected by me.

Every two years—assemblymen faced election every two years; state senators every four—I put the Fund to work. I started at the Oregon border and worked down to Mexico, studying each assembly district and those senate seats that were up for election.

My two lieutenants did the legwork. Frank X. Flynn handled Northern California, and William Jasper operated in Southern California. I gave each of them a handy sum to begin with, say about \$10,000, and they spread the money where it would do the most good. They dealt mostly in cash, because the candidates preferred it that way. We never asked for receipts.

The campaign contributions ranged from \$250 to \$1,500 in most cases. But if there happened to be a hot campaign where one of my selected candidates was running against a Dry, then the Fund might pour \$10,000 to \$20,000 into the fight.

I preferred to lay out the money for specific costs, so that I knew where it was going. A printing bill here. A headquarters rental there. The cost of a rally or radio announcements. That sort of thing.

The billboards were provided free of charge, courtesy of the brewers and liquor dealers. I kept the industry unified for maximum political results. Here is a copy of a letter I sent to the liquor retailers:

To the Industry:

As the time of the general election, November 7, draws near, campaigns of candidates for various political offices and initiative propositions will intensify.

We urge you to make no contributions, make no commitments, permit no solicitation, financial or otherwise, for your support of any candidate or proposition.

An industry-wide committee is now making a careful survey.

This committee will report to the industry association of which you are a member.

Every advantage you now enjoy in California has been made possible because a united industry stood solidly behind its leaders. . . .

When we decided on which candidates would be good for the industry, the retailers were notified. Letters were sent with the name of the assembly or senate candidate and the instructions: "We must contact our employees, our patrons, our families and relatives, our friends, and their friends and inform them of the urgent necessity for voting for this outstanding and excellent candidate. Let's make sure that our industry is protected!"

Sometimes we'd step right in and run a campaign for a candidate. Take the case of Hugh Burns.

Burns was running for the state senate from Fresno in 1942, and he seemed like a good man for our cause. "I'm not going to make a campaign contribution," I told him. "You're no good to me unless you're in Sacramento. So I'm going to see that you get there."

I assigned a bright young fellow, a man who later became a newspaper editor in Northern California, to be Burns's campaign manager. I paid the bills for newspaper ads, radio announcements, handbills. And Burns was elected.

We had ways of rewarding our friends and punishing our enemies. For instance, there was Senator Jack Metzger of Redding. I had helped him get elected and he seemed like a cooperative man. But after he became chairman of the Government Efficiency Committee, he started doing things that I didn't like. He was a smart aleck, and I told him, "You go on like this, Jack, and you're going to be defeated at the next election."

He went on like that, and he was defeated.

Senator Ralph Swing was a good friend over the years. He

was from San Bernardino, and I considered him the best mind in the legislature. A brilliant constitutional lawyer. But one year when he was chairman of the Government Efficiency Committee, he got in my way.

All of a sudden he wasn't chairman of the Government Efficiency Committee any more. I didn't make any move to defeat Ralph Swing in the elections, because I considered him too able a man. I was sure he would see the error of his ways.

He did. Ralph became his old self again, and we were pals once more.

Most of my candidates were Republicans. Some of my biographers have noted that I was a registered Republican and concluded that I possessed some party loyalty. Baloney. I never cared whether a politician was a Republican or a Democrat or a Whig. All I cared about was whether he was good for the interests of my clients.

It so happened during all the years I operated in Sacramento that, except for the Olson period of 1938-1942, the Republicans held the power. That's what I cared about—power. No matter which party it belonged to.

The peculiar politics we had in California kept the Republicans in power. The state senate was nearly always strongly Republican. The reason was simple: no county could have more than one senator. So the big urban centers which were predominantly Democratic had only one senator apiece. The cow counties, which leaned to the Republicans, had one senator apiece. A few of the smaller ones, like Inyo, Mono, and Alpine, were combined into one senatorial district. Those three had 15,000 residents in 1960, and one senator to represent them. Los Angeles County had seven million residents, and one senator to represent them.

Cross-filing also helped the Republicans.

In 1944, 90 percent of the candidates for the state senate won in the primary by taking the election in both parties. Eighty percent of the assemblymen also won their seats in the primary.

Republican campaigns were usually better financed and better organized than the Democratic ones. Also, Republicans were more apt to vote in the primaries than the Democrats.

Cross-filing was a great asset to the Samish System of Selecting and Electing. A great deal of money was saved by campaigning in only one election, rather than facing both the primary and the general elections. And it was easier to sway public opinion when a smaller vote was cast. In 1944, 86 percent of the registered voters cast their ballots in the general election, but only 56 percent voted in the primary.

Supposing I had a Republican running for assembly in a predominantly Democratic district. It might have been possible to see that a weak Democrat was nominated opposite him. Or maybe a number of Democrats, so the vote would be split and our Republican would win the Democratic nomination.

Naturally there was no problem about our man getting the Republican nomination. We wouldn't waste our time with that. We concentrated on the Democratic primary.

We could make our Republican look like a God-fearing, dues-paying Democrat. None of the campaign literature would identify him as a Republican. We sent circulars to the Democratic voters making him out to appear like one of them.

Chicanery was our middle name.

CHAPTER 19

Some More Adventures in the Political Trade, Including a Hello and a Good-bye to Mexicali Rose

ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE I TURNED MY ATTENTION FROM THE election of the legislature to campaigns for other offices. Not often. I didn't like to waste my time on unimportant things. The legislature made the laws that affected my clients, and that was my all-abiding concern.

In 1946 I got involved in the race for attorney general of California. This was because a couple of my "boys" wanted to run for it.

One of them was Fred Napoleon Howser. I gave him his start in politics when a liquor wholesaler recommended him to me for the assembly. I met Howser at the Elks Club in Long Beach, and he seemed to be a pleasant, able man. I backed his campaign, and in 1940 he was elected to the assembly. He remained grateful, and I maneuvered him into the chairmanship of the Public Morals Committee.

One day four of the five supervisors of Los Angeles County paid me a call. They were looking for someone to sponsor a bill that would raise their salaries. Not the usual way. They wanted to be appointed flood control commissioners in addition to their supervisor offices, and thus receive an extra salary.

I made it a firm policy never to accept a fee for legislation on behalf of a public agency. But I was always willing to offer advice to friendly parties.

"Why don't you get Fred Howser to handle your bill?" I suggested.

The supervisors accepted my suggestion, and their bill passed. On that same day, John Dockweiler, district attorney of Los Angeles, died. The county supervisors were charged with appointing a successor. Their choice: Fred Napoleon Howser.

Fred's middle name seemed just right for him, because he was always seeking more power. In 1946 he came to me and said he wanted to move up to attorney general.

At the same time Assemblyman Sam L. Collins of Orange County told me he wanted to run for attorney general. Sam was also one of my protégés, and I didn't want to disappoint him.

Howser or Collins?

It didn't take me long to figure out the answer. During Earl Warren's first term (1942-1946), California had had a very popular and able lieutenant governor named Fred Houser. I knew the voting public wouldn't be able to differentiate between Fred Houser and Fred N. Howser, so I told Howser that he should run for attorney general.

But what about Sam Collins?

"You can be Speaker of the Assembly," I told Sam. By God, that's what happened. Fred Napoleon Howser was elected attorney general, and Sam Collins became Speaker of the Assembly.

Later I had reason to regret both choices. When the going got rough, Sam Collins pretended he'd never heard of me. As for Fred Howser, I got him elected, but I didn't know he had all that funny money behind him. Some of his top assistants tried to muscle in on gambling rackets in the state, and they got caught at it.

Howser was in hot water, and he came to me for help.

I let him cool his heels outside my suite in the Senator Hotel for a couple of hours, then let him inside. I was having a nice, friendly lunch with thirty of the legislators, and I expressed my displeasure.

"What are you doing here, you lovin' bastard," I told the attorney general. "Don't ever let me see your lovin' face again."

Fred Napoleon Howser was wise enough not to try to run for attorney general again.

I hardly ever dabbled in municipal elections. Why the hell should I? The state makes the laws that affect the liquor industry, not the cities. I had long before removed the fangs of any local option threats. Municipal elections were only a playtoy for me.

In 1947 I did get involved in the election of Elmer E. Robinson for mayor of San Francisco. I had known Robinson since he had been a municipal judge, and I thought he would make a good mayor.

Letters went to tavern owners and hotel operators telling them: "You must vote. Your employees must vote. Your families must vote. Your friends and their friends must vote. Vote for Judge Robinson for Mayor."

Placards for Robinson were sent to every bar in San Francisco. Beer and liquor ads came down from billboards, and up went signs telling citizens: "Elect Judge Robinson Mayor of San Francisco." They did.

Since San Francisco was my hometown, I sometimes couldn't resist taking part in the local elections, even though the outcome meant nothing to my operations in Sacramento. Usually I became involved out of friendship, as in the case of Elmer Robinson.

Another good friend was George Schonfeld. George and I went way back to the Kotycks Club together. I had great admiration for George. He was a poor boy, just like me, and he had made his way up in the world the hard way. He had studied law and had been admitted to practice by the Supreme

Court of California; in those years a lawyer could get started that way instead of passing the bar. George was a damned good attorney. He was appointed deputy district attorney and then decided to run for judge. I told him I'd help him get elected.

The law establishment didn't like the idea of George's candidacy. Even though he was perfectly well qualified, the bar members didn't want a judge who hadn't passed the usual procedures for becoming a lawyer.

The Big Boys tried to put the squeeze on me. One of them told me: "Artie, pick anybody you want who's a graduate of the University of California, and we'll see that he gets the judgeship."

That's all I needed to make me more determined than ever to see that George Schonfeld got elected. I hired a radio announcer named Stew Stewart, who had a voice that could sell sand to Arabs. Stewart went on the air and told about how George had to study law while he was earning a living; he couldn't afford to go to law school. Then Stewart reminded his listeners of another young American who had to study law on his own because he couldn't afford to go to school, a fellow named Abraham Lincoln.

Oh, it was a grand fight. Not only the bar, but the entire political organization of San Francisco, headed by Tom Finn, was against George. But he won. After all, how could the citizens vote against Abe Lincoln?

The fellow who was defeated by George was Pete Mullins. Now I had nothing against Pete; in fact, I found him to be an affable, capable fellow. I ended up getting him elected, too.

It was at the Firemen's Ball, I remember. The Mullins sisters got me in a corner and asked if I would help their brother win a judgeship. I never could resist the ladies, so I agreed to support him. The race wasn't easy, because Pete was running against an incumbent. Nobody could remember when

an incumbent had been unseated from the bench.

This particular incumbent was a man I didn't like, so I had an extra pleasure in removing him from office. It was a tough campaign, but Pete won.

One of my most interesting escapades with the political breed should be told with a musical background. A few bars of "Mexicali Rose," Professor . . .

The story begins in 1936. Down in a Los Angeles district there was a popular assemblyman named Ralph Evans. He decided not to run for reelection, and a number of would-be politicians scrambled to fill his position. Most of the lobbyists put their support behind one prominent party worker, and I went along with them.

But then, about ten days before election, my Gestapo brought me some information about this particular candidate which I found disturbing. I telephoned my Southern California man, Bill Jasper.

"We gotta dump the son of a bitch," I told Bill. "Talk to all the other candidates and find out which is the best man."

Jasper invited the other candidates to visit our office in the Biltmore Hotel. They were a scroungy bunch. One of them wanted to out-Townsend Townsend, the doctor who was trying to tap the treasury for pensions for old folks. Another one was hot for the Single Tax. Only the last candidate Jasper interviewed showed any promise.

"His name is Jack Tenney and he's a nice-looking guy," Jasper reported to me.

"Why is he running for the legislature?" I asked.

"He says he's only doing it because he wants publicity. He just passed the bar."

"He sounds okay. Know anything else about him?"

"Oh, yes—he plays the piano, and he wrote a song called 'Mexicali Rose.'"

"'Mexicali Rose,' huh? I like that song. I'll come down there and talk to him."

I rode the Southern Pacific Lark to Los Angeles that night, and the next day I interviewed Jack Tenney at the Biltmore. He seemed like an affable fellow.

"What did you do before you studied for the law?" I asked him.

"I played piano in a whorehouse in Mexicali," he admitted.

I had to laugh. "Jack, you'll make a good legislator," I told him.

We went to work to get him elected. It so happened that the candidate who had lost my support also had the first name of Jack. So it was a simple matter to plaster Tenney's last name over the other fellows on all the billboards I had arranged.

This was 1936, when the popularity of Franklin Delano Roosevelt was at its peak. Naturally we had to cash in on that.

The other candidate had the official Democratic endorsement, but that didn't stop us. Bill Jasper had a newspaper friend who worked in the National Press Club Building in Washington, D.C. Bill sent his friend bundles of letters to be mailed from Washington in official-looking envelopes.

Every voter in the district got a letter from the National Democratic Committee in Washington endorsing Jack Tenney as the man to carry on the good work of President Roosevelt.

It didn't matter that there was no such thing as the National Democratic Committee (the party was run by the Democratic National Committee). It didn't matter that an assemblyman would have little to do with carrying on the programs of FDR.

What mattered was getting Jack Tenney elected.

We only had ten days, and we tried everything! We had painters stencil signs on the streetcorners:

ELECT PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S CANDIDATE—
JACK TENNEY

Jack Tenney won in a landslide.

He hardly knew what had hit him. He came to me in a daze and asked me: "What'll I do now?"

"What'll you do?" I said. "You're on your own now, Jack. I just want you to go up to Sacramento and be a good legislator."

He seemed like an eager fellow, and I saw to it that he drew some very important committee assignments. Very important. He was an eager worker, and he learned fast. He was developing into an astute assemblyman.

Except for one thing. Somehow he was getting his hands on bills that seemed rather questionable. One of the bills he introduced was a repeal of the Criminal Syndicalism Act. And there were others that seemed to favor the radical element.

Finally I asked him one day, "Jack, where are you getting these bills?"

"They come from constituents of mine," he told me.

"I don't think they're so smart. I think you should at least mark them 'Introduced by request,' so you aren't held responsible for them."

Tenney took the advice to heart, and he became more careful about the bills he took from his constituents.

After three terms in the assembly, Jack Tenney wanted to move up, and he filed for state senate from Los Angeles County. This was an important post; as the only senator from the county, he represented 43 percent of the state population. I still thought Jack Tenney was a reliable legislator, and I backed him in his successful campaign.

Something happened to Jack Tenney after he became senator. I'm not sure what the affliction was, but it might have been Headline Fever, a common ailment among politicians that can sometimes be fatal. In Tenney's case, it was.

Tenney got himself named as Chairman of the Un-American Activities Committee. He seemed to enjoy the position, and I thought it was a nice toy for him to have. I didn't care for the Communists, and if he was going to smoke some of

them out, that was all right with me. None of that red-hunting business affected my clients' interests, and so I didn't pay it any heed.

For a guy who used to introduce bills that favored the leftists, Jack Tenney surely made an abrupt change. He saw reds under every bed. As a chaser of Communists, he made Martin Dies and Joe McCarthy seem like pinkos.

He completely lost all sense of proportion. I tried to kid him: "Catch any reds today, Jack?" He didn't think it was funny. He had become The Great Man.

He also became less and less cooperative in matters of legislation that I was concerned with. That was unfortunate--for him.

Senator Tenney continued with his investigations, and a lot of innocent persons were hurt by his shotgun blasts at political positions opposed to his. Many of them were in the movie business, where I had a lot of friends. The *San Francisco Chronicle* editorialized:

. . . One of the Committee's troubles under Tenney's leadership was that it roamed and rambled into fields of character assassination and guilt by association which had nothing to do with overt subversiveness. Anyone who was in favor of overthrowing Tenney, as distinguished from overthrowing the Government, was likely to be hauled up and smeared by inquisition and innuendo. His methods have done more damage to the cause of intelligently combating Communism than almost any other influence in California. . . .

Jack Tenney had to go.

The opportunity came in 1949, when he issued a committee report that blasted everybody in sight. A bill was introduced in the assembly calling on the senate to remove Tenney as committee chairman. That night Tenney accused one of his

assembly opponents of "being on sabbatical leave from the Communist Party." Obviously Tenney had flipped his wig.

Many of the legislators had been scared to fight Tenney because he would smear them as Communists. But when Speaker Sam Collins and Assemblyman Sam Yorty, both known anti-Communists, spoke out against Tenney, his goose was cooked. He saw the end coming and resigned as chairman. He was replaced by my good friend Hugh Burns of Fresno.

Guess who Jack Tenney blamed for his defeat?

Artie Samish, of course.

Tenney bellyached that Samish had succeeded in defeating his committee's program to curb Communism in California. All his loyalty oath bills had suffered death in the legislature and "there was no doubt what happened and who caused it to happen."

He didn't stop there. He introduced a bill to have me barred from the senate. Got it passed, too.

What a laugh that was! I never went to the senate. Why should I give one tinker's damn whether I was barred?

Jack Tenney hung around the senate for a few more years, but he was pretty much discredited. So much so that he decided to go back home and run for mayor of Los Angeles.

One of his sponsors was an acquaintance of mine named Maury Stravers. He visited me one day and made the flat statement that Jack Tenney was going to be elected mayor. The few hairs that I had left on my dome stood straight up in the air.

"I'll bet you one hundred dollars to one that Jack Tenney will not be elected," I told Stravers. "I'll also bet you that whoever loses this bet will have to push a peanut around the block of the Senator Hotel with his nose. And will have to run a hundred times around the lobby."

The confident Mr. Stravers accepted the bet. The voters of Los Angeles then demonstrated their wisdom in sending Jack Tenney down to inglorious defeat.

That left the bet to be collected, and I did it in grand style. The lobby of the Senator Hotel was decorated with banners and balloons. The place was jammed with people watching circus clowns do their stunts. A disreputable-looking piano player sat in the middle of the lobby playing "Mexicali Rose" on a beat-up old piano.

A running track had been laid out on the perimeter of the lobby. A doctor was in attendance—anyway, I had a fellow dressed up in operating clothes. For the bet-losing Stravers I supplied a running uniform of red-flannel underwear.

A gun went off, and Stravers started his run. After ten laps he took a dive, and the "doctor" gave him first-aid treatment. I excused him from the peanut pushing, out of the tenderness of my heart.

It was a grand show, enjoyed by everyone present. Mr. Jack Tenney, who was not present, did not enjoy it. But then, his enjoyment of life had soured somewhat after he decided to take on Art Samish.

Not much was heard from Jack Tenney after that. But then, I suppose he could always go back to playing "Mexicali Rose" on the piano.

CHAPTER 20

What the Doctor Did after Elections, and Some Public Recognition Thereof, Not Entirely Welcome

"OKAY," SAYS THE STUDENT IN POLITICAL SCIENCE, "SO YOU SELECTED and Elected. What happened after that?"

I'll tell you what happened after that.

The California legislature was a peculiar and complex institution, which nobody knew better than Art Samish. Legislators came, legislators went. They had their term or two, or ten. But always they were subject to the whims of the fickle voters. Only Art Samish remained. I had studied the legislature from my earliest days as a page, and I knew what made the mechanism work.

I also knew how to work the mechanism.

The organization of the legislature was a matter of great delicacy. First and foremost, there was the selection of the Speaker of the Assembly.

Consult almost any book on California politics and you will learn that the Speaker of the Assembly is ranked second only to the governor as the most powerful elective officer in the state. One expert wrote about the Speaker: "His power to

control and direct legislation exceeds that of any other elective officer in the legislature."

Why is he so powerful? Because he appoints all committees and their chairmen, except for the Rules Committee, for which he appoints only the chairman. He also has the very important power of referring all bills to committee.

During my years as a lobbyist, I usually managed one way or another to assure myself that the Speaker of the Assembly was a friendly sort. With that friendship assured, it was quite natural for me to have the friendliest of representation on the committees that were important to my clients. Those committees were:

Public Morals: It had jurisdiction over alcoholic sales, racetracks, cigarettes, and other matters in which I had an interest.

Revenue and Taxation: Here originated the levies on such industries; hence it was vital for me to have friendly members.

These two were the main committees I cared about. But on occasion I would have legislation of a different nature which I wanted to promote or impede, in which case I would look into the membership of the corresponding committee.

The senate was a slightly different matter.

As I told you earlier, the lieutenant governor originally held the power of committee appointments. But my experience proved that procedure left too much to the element of chance, or political disaffection. So the appointment power was taken away from the lieutenant governor and placed under the control of a Senate Committee on Committees.

The two senate committees which were most important for my purposes were:

Governmental Efficiency: The counterpart of the Assembly Committee on Public Morals, with jurisdiction over liquor, racing, and so on.

Revenue and Taxation: Same as in the assembly.

Aside from assuring friendly committees, there were other safeguards. It helped to be friendly with the sergeants at arms, who could be accommodating about hurrying a piece of legislation through the procedure of the legislature. Or slowing it down, if necessary.

My kind of operation required knowing what was going on everywhere, at all times. My operatives attended all committee sessions and legislative meetings. In addition, all of the legislators spoke from microphones at their desks. These were fed into the Speaker's office. By rigging a telephone line into the Speaker's office, an outsider could listen in to what was happening on the assembly floor at all times.

Some of my critics have claimed that part of my power was in my control of the press. That's pure nonsense.

I had a great many friends among reporters, editors, and publishers, too. I even did a good turn for Mr. Hearst once, when he was worried about a harbor at Santa Monica. But I never counted on any newspaperman to "protect" me.

My attitude toward the press was to be as open as can be. I didn't give a goddam what they said about me. I knew some of what they printed was going to put me in a bad light. That didn't bother. I was courteous and nice to them at all times. Those reporters were darling boys, all of them.

I didn't go looking for publicity. In my line of work, it was sometimes just as well not to have any. But I didn't shy away from publicity, either.

So I wasn't unhappy in 1949 when Carey McWilliams came out in *The Nation* with his story, "The Guy Who Gets Things Done—Artie Samish, California's Uncrowned King." How could anybody object to being called a king, crowned or uncrowned?

There had been other articles about Art Samish before, but this was the first to attract nationwide attention. Here's how McWilliams analyzed the Samish methods:

The general pattern of Artie's operation is clear. When asked to represent a special interest group, his first step is to organize a trade association. The trade association, usually the alter ego of Arthur H. Samish, then retains Arthur H. Samish as its "public-relations counselor." "There is no difference," Artie once said, "between Arthur Samish and the Motor Carriers Association. I *am* the Motor Carriers Association."

Once he has a contract, Artie will obtain whatever legislation the association wants or repeal or amend obnoxious legislation. At this point the trade association usually decides that the services of Mr. Samish are indispensable. . . .

Artie, it should be noted, is a new-style political boss. Usually political machines are able to control the legislature by controlling the party. But in California both major parties have an extremely weak organization, and there are no party machines.

What Artie has done, therefore, is to convert the interest group into a political machine functioning independently of either party. From the lobbyist's point of view this represents a distinct improvement. A party machine can be challenged at the polls, but as long as Artie controls the interest groups, his power cannot be questioned. Theoretically the interest groups could dispense with his services, but it is easier, and probably cheaper, to deal with one master lobbyist than with a collection of party chiefs.

Each industry group and each of its members becomes a link in the political power of Arthur H. Samish. For example, there are 50,000 retail liquor outlets in California. The owners of these outlets are all political legmen for Artie; they are the "ward bosses" of his new streamlined machine.

In short, Artie uses the trade association as Pendergast once used a patronage machine. Patronage machines have a tendency to get out of hand—there are always minor rebellions, and the careerism of lieutenants can become bothersome—but Artie has no troubles of this sort. Most of the trade associations that he represents publish bulletins or journals, and Artie sees to it that the trade knows just as much as he thinks it should and no more about the industry's politics . . .

In the absence of party machines and given California's cross-filing system, he can nominate and elect candidates in many districts by the expenditure of nominal sums. He is very reluctant to make campaign contributions, for he knows the old California political pastime of running campaigns for a profit; he spends the money himself and thereby gets full value.

His power cannot be exposed, since the most powerful special-interest groups in the state are among his clients. For instance, Artie keeps up-to-the-minute files on the allocation of advertising space by his clients. If a newspaper becomes "unfriendly," the advertising can be promptly removed. Though Samish has been the undisputed boss of the California legislature for two decades, he has never been the subject of a newspaper exposé.

One of the keys to this man's influence is his ability to sell the police power of the state. California has been very active in regulating general business by statute. In 1907 it adopted an anti-trust act. Two years later the act was amended to provide that agreements and combinations are not illegal if their purpose is to insure a "reasonable" profit. The State Supreme Court then interpreted this provision to mean that manufacturers might set a price for commodities and require retailers to keep to it.

Finally, in 1933, the legislature adopted the Fair Trade Act, which put previous court rulings into the law and

permitted firms suffering from price cutting to sue those which sold goods below the fixed price. This whole pattern of legislation developed earlier and has been carried further in California than in any other state, the marked instability of the state's economy having created a demand for all types of "stabilization" measures. Let a retailer cut the price of a bottle of bourbon by so much as a nickel, and his establishment will promptly be visited by state liquor officers. Artie, it will be noted, does not have to hold the retailers in line; the state does the policing.

But the real secret of Samish's astonishing political power is to be found in the economic diversity of California. Only New York can rival California in that respect. Where there are many interests to be served, there is always competition for favors. On the other hand, where a single interest is dominant, as, say, "copper" in Montana, the possibilities of political merchandising are narrowly limited. Agriculture in California is not "wheat" or "corn" or "cotton"; it is 214 different crops. "Banking" is, or was, Giannini versus the other bankers. "Medicine" does not mean merely "doctors and dentists"; it means osteopaths, chiropractors, naturopaths, Chinese herb doctors, and whatnot. Hence the fantastic "angling" which makes Sacramento a market where grapes and sardines, wines and race tracks, bid for power and preference. Other lobbyists do not waste time on the legislators: they deal directly with Artie. . . .

California's legislature really is a corporate state in which commodities, not people, are represented. Artie is the middleman between the business interests and the legislators; as he himself puts it, "I'm just a guy who gets things done." The power is really not in Artie; it is in a situation which he has learned to manipulate.

In his parvenu days Artie sported a belt with an enormous buckle on which the word ARTIE was spelled

out in diamonds. Imagine a similar belt drawn tightly around the middle of California and you have an accurate symbolic representation of the power of Arthur H. Samish, California's nearly anonymous political boss.

The article in *The Nation* didn't affect me one way or another. The following month, *Collier's* came out with its stories by Lester Velie. After they appeared, Art Samish was no longer "nearly anonymous."

CHAPTER 21

Collier's Magazine Makes Art Samish the Not-so-secret Boss of California

WHEN LESTER VELIE CAME TO SACRAMENTO IN 1949, HE CAUGHT me at a good time to get his sensation-making story. I had been down in the dumps since my mother died. As I've told you, that wonderful woman meant everything to me. I could never repay her for the sacrifices she made for me, although I did everything I could to make her life happy and comfortable. It's a strange thing—after she died, I discovered she hadn't spent a lot of the money I had given her. I guess she figured that she could then help out if we were ever poor again. What a woman she was!

With Mother gone, I just didn't have the zest for the political chase that I had all those years. The thrill had gone out of it. I was getting tired of the twenty-four-hour grind of staying on top of everything that pertained to my clients. Maybe in the back of my mind I was looking for a way out.

Lucky for Lester Velie.

I knew he was coming. A friend of mine was Nate Gross, columnist on the *Chicago American*. He knew Louis Ruppel, editor of *Collier's*, and once a staff member of the *Chicago American*. The word passed along.

I had fun with Velie when he came to see me in Sacramento.

"I knew you were coming," I told him. "I also know what you've been studying about me. The Philbrick Report. The grand jury investigation. I know what you're going to do—you're going to chew my ass off."

Of course Velie protested that he wasn't planning to do any such thing, but he didn't fool me for an instant. I knew damn well what he was after. And, as long as he had come all the way across the country, I decided I'd send him back with a crackling good story.

Just in case he didn't believe how good my Gestapo was, I proceeded to tell him.

"I know what you've done since you arrived in Sacramento," I said. "You've talked to the governor, to the attorney general, to . . ." And I rattled off the name of every state official he had interviewed.

Velie's eyes kept getting wider as I told him about conversations he thought had been private.

"Now tell me this," I said. "Why did you ask the Board of Equalization whether I had taken George Stout to Florida and to the World Series?" George was the state liquor administrator.

"If you know about that, you must have a pretty good hold on that board," Velie remarked.

I didn't deny it. I even told Velie about conversations he'd had with senators and assemblymen, both in Sacramento and Los Angeles.

"You know," I said, "there's a politician waiting to see me right now. Right outside this office. He says you want to talk to him about me. And he's ready to swear that he hasn't seen me in two years."

I had a big laugh over that, and I told him, "You got to love me for telling you all this. You know, Artie's not such a bad kid."

I even told him how my Gestapo worked. I had twenty-five people stationed around the capitol, and they were truly undercover workers. Nobody knew they worked for me. In fact, they didn't even know each other.

Here's a story I told Velie:

A young man and a pretty girl were on my payroll as informants, covering legislative hearings. They became acquainted and he asked her for a date. She put that information down in her report.

The next time the young man reported to me, I asked him, "What do you mean by trying to date that young blonde in the senate chambers?" You should have seen the look on his face. He never had the slightest idea that the girl was working for me, too.

I gave Velie everything he wanted, and then some. And he printed it all. Boy, did he!

It was all there in his two articles, laid out in black and white. Running Fred Howser for attorney general. The "Road Hog" campaign. The brick-filled suitcases at the grand jury hearing. How I beat local option with the mother and her broom. The turndown of Cecil B. DeMille and Doc Strub. Jack Tenney and "Mexicali Rose." Of course I didn't give him everything. A lot of things he never knew about, because I was saving them for this book.

Lester Velie was even more overwhelmed by the Samish System than Carey McWilliams had been. Here are some of the comments about me in the *Collier's* article (which was reprinted in *Reader's Digest*):

He has a master's grasp of the inner workings of the Legislature, knows its lawmaking machinery as intimately as, say, Toscanini knows the pieces in his symphony orchestra.

To this chain of strength Samish has forged another link. It is California's Board of Equalization, a key state

agency which, his close friends as well as his critics will tell you, "is in the palm of Artie's hand" because Artie, the political powerhouse, can see to the election of its members.

The Board of Equalization administers the state liquor laws, and grants and revokes licenses. It has important discretionary powers over a wide range of taxes, and over assessments affecting vast corporations as well as sales taxes affecting small merchants. Its potentialities as a political pork barrel are second only to the state legislature. Samish can deliver both the board and the legislature.

All this came about because Samish is a practical man. Starting out as a lobbyist he found an easier way to persuade legislators than the method ordinarily employed.

Lobbyists usually perform the legitimate function of bringing their clients' interests to the attention of the lawmakers. Representatives of farmers' groups, teachers, labor and business interests have a recognized place in the state capitals and Washington. They appear before legislative committees and legitimately try to affect the shaping of legislation.

But Samish, a forthright and logical man, went right to the heart of his lobbyist's problem. The problem: to deliver legislation beneficial to his clients. Why bother with such chancy and indirect methods as marshaling arguments before legislative committees? Why not control the committees themselves?

Although he never got beyond the seventh grade in school and so never took geometry, Artie well knows the shortest distance between two points. The shortest distance to the control of committees and legislation is the control of legislators. Surest way to control a legislator: elect him. Artie Samish's system worked. . . .

Armed with a commanding block of votes, a friendly Speaker and key committees Artie is ready for all eventualities in the state legislature. But to deliver laws or kill

them, Artie needs one more thing: insight and mastery of the obscure twists and turns, the detailed legal protocol by which a bill moves from the idea stage through the legislative hopper to become a law. This is known as *procedure*.

Listen to Artie:

"Procedure," he says, "is the secret of success around here. It's the one lovin' thing I know. There isn't a short cut around the place I don't know."

No one in California knows them as well. . . .

To get a bill through under normal procedure usually takes hearings, arguments, public debates, sponsors who are out in the open. Artie openly sponsors nothing. His is the power, *not* the glory.

"Samish never fronts for anything or anyone," says Samish.

Unlike a Hague or a Crump, against whom voters can occasionally rebel, Artie provides no visible target. How can you beat a man when you don't even know that he's there?

Operating in the shadows, he is so well hidden that it is only by patient and diligent sleuthing that an investigator can find that Samish is the man behind a candidate, the man who is masterminding a drive in the legislature, the man who's backing a referendum that means millions to some private interest or boosting a spate of laws that will work against a former employer. . . .

Samish rarely makes a political speech (although he can "stimulate 'em, bring 'em to white heat" when he tries). Even more rarely does he get into the papers.

And yet here is what three lifelong friends of Artie's, men whom I saw on Artie's own, earnest request, said of him:

One, a distinguished corporation lawyer—"Artie is a one-man Tammany Hall."

Another, a great California political strategist—"Artie

a political boss? Absolutely—he's more. More than any man in California, he can deliver the Legislature."

A third, a successful corporation lawyer and the author of a best-seller—"Artie's the real Governor of California. The Governor's only the Mikado. But Artie is the Great Shogun."

The man who is all these things will only describe himself as:

"Who, me? I represent industry. I'm a lobbyist, a public relations man."

This lobbyist label, like the stripe on a zebra, gives Artie protective coloration. It is the secret of why he remains California's secret boss. The zebra blends and disappears into a jungle backdrop. Artie blends into and loses his true identity as a political boss against a similarly lush growth—the lobbying at California's state capital at Sacramento. . . .

And there was more, much more. That fellow Velie didn't miss a thing, not a lovin' thing.

The trouble was, he couldn't tell when I was clowning. Like when I told him, "If you dropped a couple of bucks in the rotunda of the Capitol, you'd start a riot."

Or when I was having dinner with Velie and I hollered to the waiter, "Hey, Senator!"

Velie put it all down.

But it wasn't anything I said that had the biggest reaction from the *Collier's* articles. It was the answer that Governor Earl Warren gave when he was asked who had more influence over the legislature, the governor or Artie Samish.

The governor's reply:

"On matters that affect his clients, Artie unquestionably has more power than the governor."

CHAPTER 22

Open Season on Art Samish, and Other Hazards of the Political Life

AFTER THOSE *Collier's* ARTICLES APPEARED, YOU-KNOW-WHAT HIT the fan.

You never heard such a furor in your life. You would have thought I was a combination of Jack the Ripper and Attila the Hun.

I honestly was surprised. I knew the articles were going to have some sensations, but I never suspected that they would shake up the state from one end to the other. It wouldn't have been so bad if I had had a chance to review the articles before publication. After I had talked to Velie, I realized I had done a lot of clowning with him, as well as a lot of straight talk. Since he didn't know me well, he might not have been able to differentiate.

For instance, when I told him, "If you get a long enough ladder and put it up against the capitol dome, you can get a picture of me unscrewing the gold cupola."

A month before the articles appeared, I wrote him for permission to look over the articles "to make certain there will be no misunderstanding or that no wrong construction will be

placed on the pictures or the text which might reflect derogatorily on the California legislature."

Velie and *Collier's* did not grant me that privilege, and the articles appeared in the issues dated August 13 and 20, 1949.

The state was in an uproar. Not just the state—the entire nation. Earl Warren was an important figure in national politics, having run for vice president in 1948, when the opinion polls elected Tom Dewey as president but the voters decided on Harry Truman.

Large numbers of legislators rose up in righteous wrath to denounce me and deny that they had ever so much as shaken my hand. I had defamed them and the legislature, they claimed.

Earl Warren was getting his lumps, too. A Republican representative from San Francisco said in Congress that *Collier's* had quoted Warren as saying I was more powerful than he was. The congressman added: "California can and must be relieved of this terrible stigma by the election of a Governor who will carry into effect the policies laid down by the late Hiram W. Johnson. . . . Would to God California could have another Governor fashioned after Hiram W. Johnson." To which I would have added: Amen!

Well, I was denounced here and denounced there, and denounced all over place. But, oddly enough, I did have a few supporters.

The *Sacramento Union* wasn't taken in by all the oratory, and it editorialized:

The article in *Collier's Magazine* about "the man who secretly controls the state" is a disservice to California. It leaves the impression that constituted authority has broken down, and that a lobbyist, Arthur H. Samish, need only turn thumbs down or thumbs up on any undertaking and that he can determine its fate.

Arthur Samish is a powerful lobbyist, whose power stems from the fact that the people elect representatives to the Legislature who will do his bidding. When the people get tired of such a set of circumstances, they need only elect others, and the change will be brought about.

But Art Samish is not the menace that he was pictured to be in the article. There are greater menaces to the welfare of California, by far, than this lobbyist. There are, for instance, the sworn enemies of the Collier-Burns highway program who have dedicated their lives and fortunes to the destruction of the Governor and his administration; there is the gambling element in the State, which reaches into the statehouse and causes weak men to do their bidding, who are constantly undermining due process in an effort to break down law enforcement machinery; there are those who would destroy California's Constitution, and set up in its place and stead a more pliable document which would serve their own selfish purposes. There are men in the statehouse when the Legislature is in session who go about their own bailiwicks with pious mien and holier-than-thou expressions, but who sabotage measures to curb slot machines in California.

Samish is a lobbyist who represents special or vested interests, and he represents them well. There are other lobbyists to represent other interests, and if it were not Samish it would be someone else, for, under our system of government, business and industry and agriculture need protection from the lawmakers, and employ lobbyists or special representatives to afford that protection.

Collier's account of lawmaking in California is much like the tourist who spends two weeks in Europe and comes back with an expert opinion of what's wrong on the continent.

My favorite reaction to the whole uproar came from a man

I didn't know. He was M. S. Slocum of Pasadena, and he wrote this letter to the *Los Angeles Times*:

In reference to the article in *Collier's* telling of the magnificent job Artie Samish is doing in Sacramento for his clients, it is our idea that we might make better use of Mr. Samish's exceptional ability. We propose the following:

1—That we, the people, hire Mr. Samish as our lobbyist at an annual salary of \$1,000,000. He will henceforth be known as "the people's lobbyist." To those who may think that this proposed salary is too large, we would point out that if Mr. Samish saved his client—the people—in proportion to what he is now saving his present clients, he would be cheap at double the price.

2—We would further require that all lobbyists register with Mr. Samish, listing clients and submitting all bills that they wanted passed so that Mr. Samish could be sure that they did not conflict with the interests of his client—the people. These lobbyists would each pay an annual fee of \$10,000 to the State, which would soon pay the salary of Mr. Samish.

3—As all bills would pass through the hands of Mr. Samish, the Legislature would only have to be in session a few days per year—just long enough to rubber stamp Mr. Samish's bills, a practice at which they have doubtless become proficient.

4—The Governor is quoted as saying, "On matters that affect his clients, Artie Samish has more power than the Governor." This clearly indicates that we would no longer need a Governor, thus eliminating his salary.

This is just a sample of the advantages of appointing Mr. Samish as the people's lobbyist.

Now *that* was an assignment I would have relished. In fact, I would have done it for nothing.

Unfortunately, Mr. Slocum's proposal didn't get a hearing. The legislators were too busy ranting about what a menace Artie Samish was.

What was I doing during all this fuss? Business as usual. People didn't realize that the legislative portion of my job was only a fraction of my activities. I was still busy taking care of my clients' interests in other areas as well.

Naturally the reporters came around to see me, and I told them anything they wanted to know. Matter of fact, I accepted the invitation of the San Francisco Press Club to address the members about the *Collier's* affair.

"I got no apology for the articles," I told them frankly. "And I got no explanations. It would be easy for me to cop a plea and say that I had been misquoted. But hell, I wouldn't do that if any of *you* got me in hot water, and I certainly wouldn't do it to a fine reporter like Lester Velie. Ninety percent of what he wrote was true. The only trouble was that he had some preconceived notions about how California politics operate. And he used all his information to try and substantiate those notions of his."

I closed by saying:

"The people must wake up. I hope the *Collier's* articles will help wake them up. The legislators are now calling for an investigation of lobbying. I welcome it. I'll do everything I can to cooperate.

"But the investigation must be thorough. It must bring in all the representatives of special interests. If the result of the investigation is to eliminate all lobbyists—including myself—I'll be the most pleased man in the State. Because I would know that the people had won back their government."

I believed that. I wasn't clowning in the least when Lester Velie asked me point-blank: "How can the people get rid of you and others like you in California, Artie?"

He printed my reply at the very end of the articles:

"There is one way. The people must take more interest in the men they elect."

CHAPTER 23

In Which Our Hero Makes More Headlines and Invites His Inquisitors to Attend the World Series

IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE *Collier's* ARTICLES, THE MEMBERS OF the legislature were intent on redeeming their honor, for which I didn't blame them. They had been treated rather severely in the gospel according to Samish, as interpreted by Velie. I knew they would want to refute the *Collier's* stories, and I was willing to go along with them—up to a point. Beyond that point I wasn't willing to proceed.

The legislators were clamoring to conduct investigations, but that privilege befell A. I. Stewart, a Republican from Pasadena and chairman of the Assembly Committee on Governmental Efficiency and Economy. "It has been suggested," said Assemblyman Stewart, "by various citizens and State officials that it is the duty of this Committee to conduct an investigation of the subject matter of that [*Collier's*] article in general and of Arthur Samish, self-styled Governor of the Legislature, in particular."

I was willing. But, as I had suggested before the San Francisco Press Club, I felt the committee should have interrogated all the representatives of special interests, not merely the No. 1 target of the moment, Art Samish.

In typical style of politicians, the hearings began and ended with the appearance of Arthur H. Samish.

They were ready for me. Committee chairman Stewart had hired—without letting the other members know about it—a special counsel. He was Eugene D. Williams, who had been an assistant district attorney in Los Angeles and an assistant in the prosecution of General Tojo, who led the Japanese war against the United States. My God, you'd think I was a war criminal!

I reported for the committee hearing in the State Building in San Francisco on September 22, 1949. First of all, I insisted on reading a statement which I had prepared. I began by saying, "If the press and the public generally will not treat this matter as a short-lived sensation and go back to sleep again, the *Collier's* articles will prove one of the most constructive happenings in California's recent history.

"Some people seem to think I talk too much about politics, lobbying, and kindred matters. The fact is I have not talked enough."

Again I declined to say I had been misquoted, although I admitted my questioning of some of Velie's interpretations of my remarks.

"I have come here to talk; to answer questions you may want to ask about good government in California. But if this committee just wants to play politics; to make a Roman holiday; to let this inquiry degenerate into plain nonsense, I hope you will spare your time and mine. This is, or should be, a serious investigation. We should get down to cases about lobbying and public interest in representative government."

I went on to point out that nobody favored more rigid enforcement of the liquor laws than I did, and I added:

"I challenge anybody to show that my interest in the Board of Equalization has been other than an insistence on a strict but impartial enforcement of the alcoholic beverage laws and regulations. I have never asked a special favor or partial enforcement of the law for any client. But I have insisted that

what is good for one must be good for all and must be in the public interest.

"By all means, let us keep an eye on lobbyists—all the lobbyists—even those who appear in the guise of public relations consultants and other phoney titles.

"Let us not be hysterical about it and let us not stop just with lobbyists and lobbying. Let us also inquire into the activities of the lawyer-legislator-lobbyists; those who have solicited and accepted or have been proffered and accepted employment from interests directly concerned with legislation."

That struck a nerve. A number of legislators, including some of those on the committee investigating me, sold their services to special interests as lawyers—and voted accordingly.

I told the committee that I was willing "regardless of what I have been in the past, to sacrifice myself to help make America safe for my children and for democracy—in short, to become the people's lobbyist."

"When did you decide that?" asked the committee counsel, Williams.

"A while ago," I said. "The public needs a good lobbyist."

"And who pays you for these beautiful thoughts—the brewers?"

"No," I said, "nobody pays me." I could see that he was out to get me, and I was on my guard.

Williams asked me whether it was true I could make or break a governor and boss legislators. "That's silly; you know better," I told him.

He asked whether I had the Board of Equalization members in the palm of my hand. I said I had never attended a board meeting, and I rarely went to legislative meetings because "lots of things that go on up there are 96 percent bull anyway."

Oh, I had fun with that fellow Williams. When I admitted I had made the remark about having my own Gestapo, he commented:

"Then you're the Hitler of California?"

"No, I didn't say so," I replied. "You may say so, Mr. Williams, but that doesn't make it true." Then I added: "Don't get funny with me. I'm trying to be cooperative."

Later he asked me about the remark that "I can tell if a man wants a baked potato, a girl, or money."

I replied that my political strength did not require the supplying of any of the three, but I added: "If you're in distress, Mr. Williams, I'll be glad to get you a baked potato."

I admitted that much of California's liquor legislation had been based on my ideas and that I had successfully campaigned against local option. But I tried to explain that a lot of the extravagant statements in the Velie articles were the result of clowning and nonsense.

Mr. Williams didn't have much of a sense of humor. He took everything seriously and even wanted to know if I had offered to unscrew the cupola on top of the capitol.

"I never had enough education to know what a cupola means," I told him. "I was just joking when I offered to climb a ladder to get some gold—if there was gold up there. We're all in the discovery business in California."

I blamed some of the statements about me on my old friend, "Philbrick the Bug." I repeatedly suggested to the committee that other lobbyists were worthy of investigation, especially Monroe Butler, who represented the millionaire oilman William Keck. Butler, who had an immense amount of money behind him, had been reported in *Collier's* as having entertained fifty legislators in his hotel suite in Sacramento.

But the committee wasn't interested in investigating the oil money that had been used to influence legislation in Sacramento. The members had found their whipping boy, Art Samish.

They had no notion of leading a full-scale investigation of lobbying, as I had suggested. As I feared, it was going to be a Roman holiday. So I treated it as such.

When the hearing was over, Chairman Stewart asked if I would be present when the committee held its meetings in Los Angeles.

"I'd be pleased to—as long as it doesn't affect the World Series," I told him. Then I had an afterthought: "Can I take the committee to the World Series?"

Chairman Stewart sniffed, "I'm not sure the committee would want you to do that in view of your testimony here today."

It was all very holier-than-thou, and the committee never held any more hearings, having acquired the headlines it was after. In December of 1949, Governor Warren called a special session of the legislature, and one of the nine points he proposed was: "To consider and act upon legislation relating to lobbying and other attempts to influence legislation."

The legislators were standing in line to introduce lobby-regulation bills, or, as one of them put it, legislation to "stamp out Samishism." Ten of the sixty-seven bills offered in the ten-day session were aimed at lobbyists, principally me.

Not only that. My dear friend, Jack Tenney, the sweetheart of Mexicali Rose, offered a resolution which began:

"Whereas, Arthur H. Samish in two widely published articles in *Collier's*, a national magazine, has boasted that he is the Secret Boss of California; and

"Whereas, The said Arthur H. Samish by his boasting statements has cast a slur and a shadow on the reputation and integrity of every member of this Legislature; now, therefore, be it

"Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the name of Arthur H. Samish and the names of his employees be stricken from the rolls of legislative representatives forever. . . ."

Forever! This incredible nonsense by that two-bit piano player managed to rush through the senate and the assembly

with the swiftness of an express train. "Railroaded" is the proper term.

Reporters asked me what I thought of Tenney's resolution.

"This is just a little gesture from the man I discovered," I told them. "You know, I found him behind the Hall of Justice in Los Angeles. He didn't have a dime."

Just to demonstrate that the ban didn't upset me, I commented: "Thank heavens it has been proved I do not control the legislature. Now I can catch up on my Christmas shopping for my grandchildren."

The banishment didn't mean a damn thing to me. Not a goddam thing. I quote from an editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

For self-righteous hypocrisy, ineptitude, and sheer futility, the sweeping exclusion of Lobbyist Arthur H. Samish and "all of his employees" from the legislative chambers—but forever!—sets a new mark.

The legislators knew to begin with that "forever" was a stipulation well beyond their means to enforce. No Legislature can bind the succeeding Legislature to any course of action. "Forever," then, was pure window dressing; it had the ring of a revival parson banishing Sin from the earth, and we presume that was just how the lads wanted it to sound.

In the next place, Samish—as every legislator knows—never comes into the Legislature itself. His bailiwick is the fourth-floor suite of the Senator Hotel, where the bulk of his work is done. Legislators come there, he doesn't go to them, and the business customarily is transacted over good liquor and a board groaning with lobster and canapes. We look for no diminution of the popularity of this traditional free snack bar for legislators.

In the third place, the Legislature's action against Sa-

mish dispensed completely with the ordinary rules of fair play. No charges were cited against him. He was not done the elementary courtesy of being invited to talk in his own behalf. Apparently the only basis for the action was the publicity Samish and the Legislature received in *Collier's* magazine, and a few legislators' red faces are hardly sufficient ground for this kind of action. . . .

The Chronicle was absolutely correct. Traffic continued at a steady pace down the fourth-floor Senator Hotel corridor that had become famed as Samish Alley. The booze remained the best in town, and the lobster and canapes were superb.

CHAPTER 24

The Collierization of California Lobbying, a Futile Gesture

THAT SPECIAL SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE IN DECEMBER OF 1949 demonstrated the devious nature of the political mind. Governor Warren, in an obvious nod to his old acquaintance Art Samish, had told the lawmakers that "the honor of our State" had been assailed.

"Disreputable lobbying practices are impairing the efficiency of State Government and besmirching the creditable work of the vast majority of our legislators, officers and employees," declared the governor.

He said that he didn't want to interfere with honest lobbying, "but everyone around this Capitol knows the kind of lobbyist influence that is not helpful, that is not honest."

The governor presented a bill to the legislature which was a mixture of lobbying measures adopted by other states. Its provisions:

1. Registered lobbyists must report all financial dealings with legislators, the governor and lieutenant governor; this included campaign contributions.

2. All individuals, corporations or groups hiring lobbyists must file detailed accounts of such expenditures, including campaign contributions.
3. No lobbyist could be employed on a contingency basis—payment due only upon success.
4. No elective or appointive officer of the state can represent a client before any agency of the administration or legislature.
5. Those guilty of infractions of the first three provisions would be subject to felony prosecution.

The legislators gave lip service to the bill, but I knew damn well they wouldn't vote for it. It was like asking them to cut off an arm or a leg, or something even more vital. It was that Point 4 that bugged a lot of them. Many of the legislators were earning fancy fees by representing interests as lawyers. In fact, it has long been the custom for lawyer-legislators to retire from the senate or assembly and stay on in Sacramento as high-powered lobbyists and lawyer-representatives.

The legislators gave the business to the governor's bill. First of all, both houses took out the portion that applied to lawyer-legislators. They passed the bill, but the assembly provided a convenient amendment that made it apply to no one. Because of the different versions of the bill, it went to conference, but the assembly adjourned without even waiting for the conference report.

The legislature eventually passed not one, but three separate bills regulating lobbying. All three were patterned after the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act. In fact, the legislators did such a poor job of copying that the word "Congress" had been left in the bills and later "Legislature" had to be substituted.

So Earl Warren had his choice of three bills, all of which he called "half a loaf." He signed the Collier Bill, and this led to the observation that lobbying in California had not been regulated but Collierized, because of the magazine and the bill.

The assemblyman who took credit for the bill was John L. E. Collier of Highland Park. He was not exactly a fan of mine. In fact, he had ranted to the newspapers that I was "the most sinister, unethical and corrupt stylist in the lobbying profession." I didn't think much of him, either.

Nor his bill. I wasn't upset by its provisions—hell, I could operate under it with no trouble whatsoever. What distressed me about the Collier Bill was that it was a sloppy piece of legislation.

It aimed to do two things: (1) require everyone receiving contributions or making expenditures for the purpose of influencing legislation to file monthly statements identifying contributors of twenty dollars or more and the recipients thereof; (2) require every paid lobbyist to register details of his employment and file monthly financial reports of contributions and expenditures over ten dollars, to name publications which printed articles at his request, and to identify the legislation he was hired to influence.

A lousy bill, and the legislature soon realized it.

In the 1950 special session of the legislature, a joint committee declared that the Collier Act was "inadequate and to a large extent unintelligible and ambiguous. . . . It cannot be clarified or strengthened without a complete rewriting."

The committee, headed by Tom Erwin of Los Angeles, declared that it had "sincerely attempted to study the entire matter in a calm and sensible manner, rather than give way to the hysteria which was generated in many minds following the publication of a certain magazine article." Guess which one.

The 1950 legislature came forth with the Erwin Bill, which tried to straighten out some of the nonsense that had been in the Collier Bill. As you might expect, the learned lawmakers wouldn't touch the matter of the lawyer-legislators with a ten-foot pole.

The Joint Committee declared that "only confusion can result from an attempt to cover, in a measure designed to regulate the activities of professional lobbyists, the subject of cor-

rupt practices by some members of the electorate, and the subject of what activities a Member of the Legislature may properly engage in." Besides, the committee decided, "an attempt to cover so broad a field in one bill would be the surest way to insure its defeat by those who want no regulation of lobbyists."

So the legislature preserved the fat fees of its lawyer members. The Erwin Bill had four main provisions:

1. Disclosure of the employment of legislators by lobbyists or their employers.
2. Prohibition of "contingency" employment for lobbyists.
3. Establishment of a board of four senators and four assemblymen to register and regulate lobbyists and recommend improvements in the law.
4. Establishment of a code of behavior for lobbyists.

This code amounted to a Bill of Wrongs with which lobbyists would be measured for misbehavior. In fact, it could have been interpreted like the Ten Commandments:

Thou shalt register as a lobbyist.

Thou shalt abstain from acts designed to obligate legislators.

Thou shalt never attempt to deceive a legislator.

Thou shalt never introduce a "cinch" bill (one which is certain of defeat, but is introduced for ulterior motives—to impress a client, embarrass an enemy, etc.).

Thou shalt not seek employment except on the basis of knowing thy employer's field.

Thou shalt not create fictitious appearances of public support on a legislative proposal.

Thou shalt refuse to deal on legislative matters with a lobbyist whose registration has been suspended or revoked.

Thou shalt not claim that thou can control or obtain the

vote or action of any member or committee or the Governor of California.

Thou shalt not represent an interest adverse to that of thy employer.

Thou shalt keep records needed to substantiate thy financial reports for a two-year period.

That was the result of the legislature's Operation Samish, as the newspapers termed it. Big deal! The Erwin Bill passed both houses and was sent to Governor Warren, who called it "the lobbyist's own bill." If he meant me, he was off the beam. I had nothing to do with it. I didn't give a damn what they passed.

Warren signed the Erwin Bill, which had been greatly amended, and it became the law of the state.

How did it affect me?

Not at all.

Oh, perhaps I had to change some of my procedures. But I went on doing business at the same old stand, watching after the interests of my clients.

The hubbub over the Collierization of California lobbying ended without a conclusion. The whole point had been missed by everyone concerned. All the rules and regulations in the world wouldn't change the influence of lobbyists like myself in Sacramento.

There was only one way the situation would change. I gave the secret in the last paragraph of the *Collier's* articles.

Velie asked me how the people of California could get rid of me and others like me.

"There is one way," I told him. "The people must take more interest in the men they elect."

As long as the people of California paid only \$1,200 a year to the men who made their laws, as long as most candidates were elected in the primaries, as long as most citizens didn't even know the names of their senators and assemblymen, then the people would not get rid of Art Samish.

CHAPTER 25

A Fatal Encounter with a Traveling Circus

IF YOU HAVE READ THIS FAR, THEN YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RECOGNIZE the amazing survival powers of Artie Samish.

By God, look what I came up against! The grand jury investigation. The Philbrick Report. The *Collier's* articles. The assembly committee hearing. Banishment from the legislature "forever." The Collier Bill and the Erwin Bill, both of them aimed at Art Samish.

I survived.

Not only survived. I continued to flourish. My clients continued to contract for my services, and I served them well. My enthusiasm for the job was not the same since my mother died, but I kept the business going, partly out of habit, partly to spite my enemies.

It appeared that nothing could defeat me. But the fates combined with the Presidential Virus to bring me down.

What do I mean by that? I'll tell you.

The Presidential Virus is one of the rarest and most serious diseases known to man. It infects political bodies, and once it

grabs a hold, it is almost impossible to cure. Look at Harold Stassen, a hopeless case.

Earl Warren was a victim of the Presidential Virus. He had been a popular governor of California, winning his second term unopposed in 1946. He had his eye on the White House, and he nearly made vice president in 1948. Now his sights were on the 1952 presidential election. His chances were helped when he won an unprecedented third term as governor in 1950.

But Art Samish was a source of embarrassment to the Guv. After all, he had admitted before God and everybody that, in matters concerning my clients, I had more power than he did. That wasn't good for his reputation. Not good at all.

Obviously Earl Warren had to do something to repair his image. His move for lobbying legislation was part of that. I suspect he also had some other ideas in mind. I told you in Chapter II about how I helped the governor get through the legislature his California Special Study Commission on Organized Crime. And how his man Warren Olney III, the son of one of my early mentors, tried to get me to squeal on a dying bookmaker. And how I infuriated Olney by pointing two fingers at him and telling him, "Don't you try to put words in my mouth."

Later Dwight Eisenhower became President, and Earl Warren was very close to the new Republican administration. So close that he was chosen chief justice of the United States. And who should become an assistant United States attorney in Washington, D.C., but my old friend Warren Olney. He had an old score to settle.

Olney had help from another politician who had been infected with the Presidential Virus. His name was Estes Kefauver, and he was a barefoot boy from Tennessee. He became United States senator and in 1950 embarked on a series of hearings of the Special Senate Committee to Investigate Crime in Interstate Commerce. Kefauver was chairman, and he found a brand-new way to become a national political figure: television.

Senator Kefauver became as famous as Lucille Ball and Arthur Godfrey in the early days of television. Viewers stayed glued to their sets as the drawling Tennessean took on the big and small fry of organized crime.

Like most successful productions, the Kefauver Committee went on a road tour, and naturally he came prospecting for headlines (and votes) in California. And naturally he subpoenaed Art Samish, who was everybody's favorite target of the moment.

I was the soul of cooperation. Investigators for the committee came around to see me, and I gave them anything they wanted. They couldn't have asked for a more helpful subject.

On March 2, 1951, I paid Senator Kefauver a call. I even arrived a half hour early for the hearings in the Post Office Building in San Francisco. With me was Harold Hoertkorn, my accountant, who brought along a couple of briefcases. This time I didn't have bricks in them; the senator had asked me to bring along my financial records of the previous ten years, which I was pleased to do. Also with me were my associate, James Rieden, and of course my old pal and piano player, Walter King. After all, I couldn't put on a show without having Walter there.

And what a show it was. Television cameras. Spotlights. A packed house. Reporters and photographers. I was determined to give them a good performance.

The senator was a very courtly Southern gentleman, and he greeted me with kindness and consideration. I extended the same to him. We shook hands and smiled at each other, and I assured him I would cooperate to the fullest.

I explained that I worked for the California Brewers Institute and "as long as we have the use of television, I'm going to sell some beer." So I told the audience how the brewers combined the grains and the hops and the whole process of beer making.

Senator Kefauver didn't seem so interested in beer making.

He wanted to know what my arrangements were with the Brewers and how I operated.

"I want to be very helpful with this committee and with you, Senator," I told him. "I have here a copy of a contract I made with the Brewers in 1935. I think you'll find it most interesting. Just one thing, though. I ask you to keep it to yourself. No one else has seen it."

The senator looked as if I had handed him a pinless grenade.

"Just a minute," he said. "This is a public hearing, and I don't want my fingers on anything confidential."

"In that case," I told him, "you can do anything you want with it."

The senator asked me to name my clients in 1949. I gazed at the ceiling for a long time, then replied, "I'll have to look at my records about that."

I looked inside one of the brief cases and then I told him my employers: the Brewers Institute, the Philip Morris Cigarette Company, Schenley Industries of New York, and the Motor Carriers Association.

"I've been working with the Motor Carriers for twenty-five years," I remarked.

What about the California Orange Association? It was apparent that the committee investigators had been studying up on me through the Philbrick Report.

"That was a nominal account I had for \$5,000 ten years ago," I said.

And the Southern California Distilled Spirits Foundation?

"I confer with them on policy, but I receive no compensation from them."

The committee dwelled at great length on the Brewers' Five-Cent Fund. The committee had already learned some details about the Fund from James G. Hamilton, the Secretary of the Brewers Institute. During the previous six years the Fund had amounted to \$935,943.19, which had been deposited in a

special account in Crocker First National Bank of San Francisco. Hamilton said that I had complete control of that account.

Senator Kefauver asked him: "Now, when it comes up as to whether a proposed referendum is to be good or bad for the brewing industry, whether an election of a State Senator, a member of the Legislature or the passage of a bill in the Legislature will be good or bad, that decision is made exclusively and wholly by Mr. Samish?"

"That is my understanding, yes," said Hamilton.

The senator seemed very intent on finding out where the money went. I told him the checks on the Fund were made up in my office, sent to the Brewers Institute for signing, then returned to my office. Then I was asked what happened to the bank statement and the canceled checks after they were returned from the bank.

"I take a recapitulation--the bank statement and the canceled checks--and I throw them in the wastebasket," I replied.

That answer seemed to startle the entire committee. I was asked specifically about a check for \$15,000 drawn for cash on October 3, 1950. That, I explained, was during the General Election when many checks for cash were spent to see that "honest, outstanding officials that subscribed to the temperate use of beer, wine, spirits and other things are returned to office."

Then we had this exchange:

Q. And where does the money go, sir?

A. It is expended.

Q. It is expended?

I nodded.

Q. And what does that mean?

A. Well, it is expended in connection with campaigns.

Q. And who gets it?

A. The cash is handled through me.

Q. You get the cash, then?

A. Yes.

Q. And what do you do with the cash?

A. We spend it. Make contributions and distributions. . . .

Q. Well, sir, we are not arguing policy with you. We are trying to find out where the money went, physically--whose hands it got into.

A. Well, it comes into mine.

Q. And then where does it go from yours?

A. It is given in contributions.

Q. To whom?

A. To different campaigns.

Q. Name one.

A. Well, I don't keep a record of that. I'd be glad to see if I could find it for you. . . .

Q. Now you have the money in your hand. You have \$10,000. You are going to give it to the campaign committee. How do you do it?

A. I handle it. I have been doing it for a great many years.

Q. Do you handle it in cash?

A. Well, we pay bills sometimes. Sometimes we handle it in cash.

Q. What is wrong with writing a little check to the campaign committee?

A. I tell you what I decided after this situation--I told Mr. Hoertkorn, my accountant, "For your information, starting March 1, everything in that Fund is going to be by check. . . ."

Q. Is there a distinction between "cash" and "contributions"?

A. "Cash" and "contributions" are the same thing.

Q. Who decides whether it is to be a contribution or cash?

A. All of our contributions, with rare exceptions—once in a while we may make a check out if I don't happen to be around, or for what reason I don't know—but I would say that 95 percent of it is in cash.

We chatted about this and that and the other thing, and the senator seemed intrigued about my attitude toward money. I mentioned that I got a flat payment of \$36,000 a year from Schenley.

"You must do a lot of work for them for \$36,000," Kefauver said.

"Well, I do at times, Senator," I told him. "I do, but not always. I mean I am 'callable' when they want me."

I added that Schenley used to pay me \$54,000 a year, but that had been cut down "because I was earning too much money."

It was a most pleasant conversation, as far as I was concerned. I enjoyed being on television, and I think I put on a hell of a show—my pal Joe Schenck said I gave an excellent performance, and he was an expert.

When I was excused after a full day's testimony, Senator Kefauver stood up and said very cordially, "Let me thank you for appearing before this committee."

"I must thank you, Senator," I told him. "I was glad to have had the opportunity to sell my beer."

I guess I made quite an impression on him, because later he gave out that quote I told you about earlier. His full comment was:

"In both personality and physique, Samish is a remarkable figure. Physically, he stands over six feet, two inches, in height, and must weigh better than three hundred pounds. He is bald with a monk's tonsure of gray fringe, and his face has the bland innocence of an *enfant terrible* about to light a giant firecracker under his nurse's chair. In manner, he is a combination of Falstaff, Little Boy Blue, Machiavelli, crossed with an eel."

A compliment, I guess. But Senator Kefauver was not so complimentary when he filed his committee report. He remarked about the Brewers' Fund:

"Mr. Samish was extremely vague as to exactly how this money was spent. He has no records to indicate what he has done with almost two million dollars which passed through his hands. He testified that he threw canceled checks and bank statements into the wastebasket.

"He made no reports to the Brewers Institute, though he was required by contract to do so. Most of the checks were drawn to cash and, according to Samish, the cash was 'expended in connection with campaigns.' It seems obvious that these sums were spent by Samish to elect candidates he could depend on or control."

The Kefauver Committee recommended that both the Justice Department and the Internal Revenue Service look into the affairs of Arthur H. Samish in connection with California Brewers Institute.

So there was Artie on the spot again.

Well, I had been there before, and I had always escaped. But this was the first time I had been up against the Federals.

The Justice Department came around and looked into my affairs and couldn't find any hanky-panky.

The Internal Revenue boys swarmed down on me, and I handed over the canceled checks and bank statements Senator Kefauver had been inquiring about.

"But you told the Senator you had thrown these in the wastebasket," said one of the agents.

"Sure," I replied. "But he didn't ask me what I did with the lovin' wastebasket. I just reached in and pulled 'em out."

For months, the Internal Revenue boys went over my records. They couldn't find a thing that wasn't on the up-and-up. It appeared Artie Samish had once more escaped the massive efforts to do him in.

But then, appearances can be deceiving.

CHAPTER 26

In Which the Famous Samish Luck Finally Runs Out

THOSE LOVIN' T-MEN LIVED WITH ME FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS. I mean *lived with me*. They spent more time in my office than my secretary did. They asked me questions for three hours at a time. They traveled all over the country with me.

"You fellows want to study me?" I said to them one day. "Well, I'm going down to Miami for a while. Why not come along? I'll put you up at my suite. We'll live it up. What do you like? Sailing? Girls? Gambling? If you want to know how I live and have a little fun, too, come along and you'll really learn."

So the three of us went to Miami. But of course the Treasury men wouldn't stay in my suite. They put up at a smaller hotel. And instead of the usual Miami pleasures, they spent their time interviewing all my friends and trying to get the lowdown on Artie.

Poor fellows! By the time they finished with the case, they were so worn out that they had to go into the hospital, both of them.

I came to like those two boys—Jack Wilks and Charles Kisthardt were their names. I liked them even though they

were trying to hang me. They were just doing their job, and I did everything I could to help them. I had nothing to hide.

The T-men probably would have given up if it hadn't been for my old friend Warren Olney III. He had been helped along by Earl Warren, first in the district attorney's office in Alameda County, then when Warren was attorney general of California. After Eisenhower became President, Warren became chief justice and his protégé Olney headed the criminal division of the attorney general's office.

Olney wouldn't accept the Justice Department's decision that there was "no provable violation of federal law" in the Samish case. Olney convinced the Internal Revenue Service to continue investigating me until something turned up.

And so the T-men continued on my tail until they thought they found something. And Warren Olney III flew from Washington to San Francisco to make sure that the proceedings got under way before the statute of limitations expired.

I had been so certain that I had done nothing wrong that I let the T-men inspect all my personal correspondence, which I really didn't have to show them. That's where they found the clue that led them to the Biow Company.

Milton Biow. The name makes me sick just thinking about it.

I first met the son of a bitch in early 1942. Only I didn't know then that he was a son of a bitch. Biow operated a big advertising agency and one of his accounts was Philip Morris, which I represented in California. Alfred Lyon, the president of Philip Morris, was in Miami Beach when I was visiting him. He telephoned Biow in New York and suggested that Biow come down to Florida and meet me.

We met at dinner in Lyon's house, and I soon learned why Biow was so eager to make my acquaintance. "I'd like you to help me get the Schenley account for my agency," he said.

Lyon assured me that Biow had done a splendid job in advertising Philip Morris. As a favor to Lyon, I agreed to put in

a good word for Biow with Lewis Rosenstiel, the president of Schenley. And I did.

Shortly afterward, I met with Rosenstiel and mentioned what good work Biow had done for Philip Morris and suggested that Schenley might investigate the possibility of hiring Biow's agency.

That was that. I had nothing more to do with the negotiations, which turned out successfully for Biow. In early 1943 Biow went to Tucson to meet with Rosenstiel, and Schenley entered into a contract with the Biow agency. To me the affair had ended. I had simply done a favor for Mr. Lyon, for his friend Mr. Biow, and for Mr. Rosenstiel. I sought no compensation for any of them and expected none.

A year afterward, I was in Lyon's office in New York, and he said to me, "Milton Biow is so grateful for your help in getting the Schenley account that he wants to give you something."

"I don't need anything from Milton Biow," I told Lyon. "I get enough already from Philip Morris and Schenley."

"Yes, but he wants to give you something, anyway. You'd be foolish not to take it, Artie."

"Well, if he wants to give his money away, I can find ways to do it. Not for myself. But if he wants to make some political contributions and gifts to some friends of mine, I suppose there's no reason why I should stop him."

Later I talked to Biow himself, and he told me that he wanted to reward me for helping him with the Schenley account. I told him exactly what I had told Lyon: if he wanted to contribute to campaigns and to worthy friends, he was free to do so.

In late 1944, Biow asked me to meet with his treasurer, Morris Zinneman, which I did.

"I have some money for you and I want to make out some checks to cover it," Zinneman said. "Give me some names."

"Why don't you just make out the checks to me," I suggested.

"No, I can't do that," he said. "I don't want your name on the checks."

"Why not?"

"That's my business."

It seemed like a funny way to do business, but I gave him names of friends of mine and he filled out the checks. This went on for a period of years. I never knew what the amounts of the checks would be, or how often they would be issued. But the checks kept coming, and I kept giving them to worthy recipients. I was playing with someone else's money, and it was fun.

But the Internal Revenue Service didn't see it that way.

In 1953 the government charged me with evading \$71,878 of income taxes because of thirty-four checks that had been issued by the Biow Company.

I still wasn't concerned. My whole life was an open book—I proved that by showing the T-men my correspondence and everything else they asked for. I hadn't used that Biow money for myself. It had gone to worthy friends and for political purposes. I didn't think I had anything to worry about.

I was wrong. I had misjudged the resolve of Warren Olney III to see that I was punished. And I didn't realize how far Milton Biow would go to cover up his own misdeeds.

After I had been hit by the suit, I subpoenaed the books of account of the Biow agency. That's when I realized something strange was going on. There was no Samish account. Instead, the checks that had been issued to the payees I suggested were listed as "radio time," "radio talent," "magazine payable," "newspapers," or "outdoor advertising." Curious.

Even more curious was the fact that when the Revenue agents called on Biow and Zinneman on August 20, 1952, all the checks prior to August 1, 1948, had been destroyed. So had

the account books prior to January 1, 1948. The checks I received from Biow covered a period from 1946 to 1951.

Biow testified that he met me for the first time in March of 1943. He declared that I went to him and demanded three-quarters of 3 percent of the Schenley account in payment for convincing Lewis Rosenstiel to shift his advertising to Biow.

My God, I couldn't believe my ears!

He met me for the first time in March of 1943? Alfred Lyon of Philip Morris testified that he arranged a meeting between Biow and me in Miami in early 1942. I produced letters from Biow to me in 1942, proving we had met before March of 1943.

As to the demand that I receive a percentage of the Schenley account, that was pure fantasy. And even if I had demanded the amount Biow stated, he would have underpaid me \$105,000.

I took the stand in my own behalf and told the story as freely and openly as I could. How Al Lyon introduced me to Milton Biow, who wanted me to help swing the Schenley account to his agency. How I suggested to Lewis Rosenstiel that he look into the matter. How Al Lyon said I was a fool not to accept Biow's offer of payment out of gratitude. How I told Biow to make some donations to friends of mine and to political causes if he wanted to. How I wanted him to make out the checks to me but he insisted on using other names.

It was hard for me to take the trial seriously. To me it was just like the grand jury investigation or the Crime Commission hearing or the Kefauver Committee appearance. I thought it was just another show. I couldn't believe that the government had anything on me.

The judge was Oliver Hamlin, a man I had known—I used to give him tips when I ran into him at the racetrack. I guess I should have been more concerned by the fact that both Hamlin and the prosecutor, Lloyd Burge, had been protégés of Earl Warren.

When I heard the verdict, on November 17, 1953, I had to smile. I just couldn't believe it when the foreman of the jury said I was guilty on eight counts of willful attempted evasion of income taxes.

Afterward, some of the jury admitted that they had been confused by the technicalities in the instructions. I didn't blame them. I was confused myself. Anyone who wasn't a tax lawyer would have been. My case should have been tried in a tax court, not a criminal court. And it probably would have been—if my name hadn't been Arthur H. Samish.

Naturally I appealed the verdict. I couldn't imagine that an appeals court would not recognize that I had *not* willfully, intentionally, and knowingly attempted to defraud the government. Nor could I imagine that a higher court would place any faith in the testimony of Milton Biow, in view of the wrongs he had committed.

The United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, reviewed my case and issued a decision on May 20, 1955. The Court declared, ". . . if Biow's low standard of morality as shown in the record is any excuse for Samish, then Samish ought to go free."

The judges declared that Judge Hamlin had made a mistake in an instruction to the jury that "seemed to pass lightly over the keeping of dishonest books" by Biow.

But in the end the Appellate Court judges decided against me. This was their reasoning:

"One begins with the business background. Samish, without question, had done Biow a huge business favor. Biow offers to pay Samish. Can Samish avoid tax liability by saying, 'You can't pay me. But you can make some gifts to friends of mine (not yours). Give me the checks. Let me present them. And you can also give me some political money.' Someone owned the checks at the moment they were in Samish's hands. That man was Samish."

Again I couldn't believe that I had broken the law. I took

the case to the United States Supreme Court, where Earl Warren was now sitting as chief justice. Warren disqualified himself in my case, but it was denied a hearing.

Finally I realized it wasn't a joke. It was all too true. Yet I wasn't bitter. It had been a very enlightening experience. Because of it, I learned who were my friends.

One of the first to desert me was Lewis Rosenstiel. The same Rosenstiel who had written to me in 1946: "Dear Pops, First and foremost, there is nobody in the world that I love better than you. . . ." We were the greatest of pals in the years when I was running 10 High whiskey out of California for him and performing other chores that added to his millions. But when I got in trouble and needed him, he got lost.

But for all those who turned tail when trouble started, there were just as many who stuck by me.

Many friends wrote to Judge Hamlin to ask for probation for me. I quote just a few excerpts from the letters:

Herbert Bayard Swope—" . . . in the twenty years or so of our friendship, I have never known him to behave in other manner than one reflecting credit upon him. He has shown loyalty to his friends; generosity, courage and a sense of social obligation . . ."

Louis B. Mayer—"I have known Arthur Samish for some twenty years. During that time I have always found his two outstanding characteristics to be loyalty and truthfulness. . . ."

Gene Fowler—" . . . will you allow me to say that this man has in the past done many acts of great charity; and in his personal life—away from the hurly-burly of politics—has been both honorable and kind. . . ."

One of my great friends who remained steadfast in my time of trouble was Judge Timothy Fitzpatrick. He was one of the great, dedicated public servants of San Francisco, an early supporter of the reforms of Hiram Johnson and later the dean of superior court judges.

Judge Fitzpatrick wrote to Judge Hamlin in support of my

application for probation. Judge Fitzpatrick began by quoting from Shakespeare:

"The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones."

The events of the past few months, the atmosphere surrounding the trial, the highly colored and prejudicial accounts carried by the newspapers, which I feel must have greatly influenced the attitude of the jury, and the general tendency to ignore facts and aspects which might be favorable to the accused, testify eloquently to the truth of this quotation. I think in simple fairness it behooves those who have known Mr. Samish through all the years to speak up courageously and bring into consideration the many good and noble things that this man has done."

I won't bore the reader with Judge Fitzpatrick's recital of my virtues. But he did say that for thirty years he had represented the superior court in all legislative matters affecting the judiciary of the state—"in all matters affecting the well-being of our courts and our judges he [Samish] has not only cooperated wholeheartedly, but has gone out of his way and spent his own money." He added:

While it is true that Mr. Samish has wielded great power in our legislative bodies in Sacramento, I know of no instance in which he applied that influence to the detriment of any person, or in a manner contrary to civic and governmental interest.

Referring to my conviction, Judge Fitzpatrick said,

I think emphasis must be laid on the fact that the crime was not one of moral turpitude, but one of the economic derelictions unknown to the Common Law and

originating in the recent past. From a study of the facts and circumstances known to me, I firmly believe that Mr. Samish did not willfully and intentionally violate the law; and I feel that the fact that in his entire life this is the first time that a criminal accusation of any nature has been leveled against him is entitled to great weight in arriving at a decision.

This fine judge's plea fell on deaf ears and I was sentenced to three years in federal prison and fined \$40,000. In addition, the Internal Revenue Service decreed that I owed income taxes on the moneys I received in connection with the Brewers' Fund. I settled that for \$919,374.

I didn't give a damn about the money. I didn't even fret about going to prison—hell, I was willing to take the bad with the good, and I'd had it good for a long, long time. My only concern was the grief and sorrow that the whole affair caused my dear wife and my two daughters. But they were so brave and wonderful that I was able to go off on my next adventure in good spirits.

CHAPTER 27

The Isle of Magic—and Afterward

AS I FLEW FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO THE STATE OF WASHINGTON with a deputy marshal as my traveling companion, I couldn't believe it was happening to me. But it was, and I was going to make the most of it. I had managed to pull myself through a lot of sticky situations. I could do it again.

McNeil Island wasn't so bad. As a matter of fact, I was prepared for it. All those Christmas parties I gave at San Quentin, those visits to Folsom and other prisons—they had made me ready for my life on the Isle of Magic.

As you might expect, Artie took over.

I decided that the prison was unsanitary. Absolutely unsanitary. I went around the place, inspecting the nooks and crannies and pointing out conditions that were dangerous to the health of the inmates.

I was appointed Chief of Safety and Sanitation.

Naturally I had to have an assistant for such an important post, and I chose a buddy of mine named Smokey. He was a nice little fellow who had been in the stir a couple of times or more, and he was willing to go along with anything I suggested. Why not? Smokey and I had free run of the Isle of Dreams.

We got ourselves some spray cans and we went all over the place. We'd go into the woodshop and I'd run my finger along the windowsill.

"HMMMM, terribly dirty. Unsanitary. Smokey—spray it."

We'd walk along the cellblock and I'd peek into a corner.

"Smokey—spray it."

We went all over the damn prison spraying here and spraying there. And you know what was in the spray can? Not a goddam thing but water!

Except once. That was the day I found out that my fine of \$40,000 was being paid in San Francisco. That day I pissed into the spray can. I had the distinct pleasure of being able to piss all over McNeil Island prison on that memorable day.

The warden didn't bother me and I didn't bother him. We had sort of a hands-off policy. I was always saying, "I love everybody in this place—except one." The warden never knew if he was the one, and I never told him.

I made some good friends at the Isle of Dreams. One of them was a lieutenant who was tolerant of my funmaking ways. One night Smokey and I were caught in the kitchen by a guard I called Moustache Pete.

Moustache Pete got all excited and rushed to report to the lieutenant: "I found Samish and Smokey in the kitchen and they were eating steaks—a dozen of them!"

"Yeah?" said the lieutenant. "Tell 'em to save one for me."

I had the Isle of Dreams so well organized that I didn't give a damn whether I stayed in or got out. But I did get out in March of 1958 after twenty-six months as a guest of the place. And I went out in style. I had one of the boys in the woodshop make me up a plaque on which was written the notice that I had "graduated from the Isle of Dreams."

When they checked me out, I asked for the oldest, most disreputable suit they had. Then I got a beat-up old cap and turned it to one side. When the reporters greeted me as I stepped off the ferry, I looked like a real character.

And so—back to San Francisco to pick up my life once more.

I was through with politics. I had been at the heart of the California political scene for forty years, and I had no desire to go back to it. A few organizations indicated they would like to have me represent them, but I told them I wasn't interested.

Fortunately I didn't need the money. The income tax suit and penalties had cost me over a million dollars, but I had some investments left. A few oil wells here and there. I built a couple of hotels in Palm Springs. And I had been retired with a comfortable pension by the Brewers Institute.

I kept my office in the Kohl Building, and I engaged in some import-export enterprises. I had fun opening up a classy hotel for dogs called Pets Inn. But my main interest became my wife Merced, my two daughters, and seven grandchildren. I had neglected them too long. Now I was determined to make up for it.

During the past decade I've steered clear of politics. But I had fun one day in 1969 when I accepted an invitation from the Sacramento Press Club to address their membership. And guess where the meeting was held—the Senator Hotel. Yes, the same hostelry that once housed the famous Samish Alley, where I once conducted a circus in the lobby to celebrate the defeat of that fellow who wrote "Mexicali Rose." I forget his name.

It had been fifteen years since I had been on the Sacramento scene, and there were a lot of new faces among the members of the Press Club. Many of them hadn't been born when I was pulling off my stunts in the legislature. But they had heard of Artie Samish.

"This'll sound like I'm biting the hand that used to feed me—and feed me well," I smiled. "But I'm going to say it anyway. The fact is that my former clients aren't paying enough in taxes."

Liquor and cigarettes, especially. As long as I represented

the liquor industry, there was no increase in taxes on liquor. I saved the beer industry \$10,000,000 a year by keeping taxes at the same level as 1935. Not until 1959 was the beer tax increased. The distilled spirits tax went up in 1955. In 1959 the state started to tax cigarettes for the first time.

Today's taxes on liquor and cigarettes are still not enough, I told the Press Clubbers.

"The tax on beer was two cents a gallon all those years I represented the brewers," I said. "Now it's four cents. I think it ought to be eight cents."

Thanks to my work in the past, liquor wholesalers have the state working for them by enforcing prices. Yet those wholesalers pay only an annual license fee of \$328. Chickenfeed.

"As far as I'm concerned," I told my audience, "the state could tax cigarettes out of existence. At any rate, cigarettes aren't taxed enough. There should be a twenty-five-dollar tax on all cigarette machines. And the dealers should be forced to prohibit sales to minors. There's no enforcement at all; children can buy cigarettes anywhere."

Then I turned my attention to other former employers of mine, the lovin' racetracks. They get away with highway robbery. The state keeps giving them longer racing seasons—822 days in 1971—and the tracks get richer. They should give up a bigger part of their take. And the state should get a share of the admissions, concessions, and parking, too.

Those oil companies have a soft touch, too. There should be a severance tax of fifteen cents a barrel on the oil taken from under California. With production at a million barrels a day, that kind of taxation would ease the burden on the property owner. Potash, gypsum, and other minerals should be subject to a severance tax.

"Unless there is a change in the taxation structure," I said, "some day all of us will need a poor people's lobbyist in Sacramento. Not me. I'm retired from the lobbying business."

CHAPTER 28

A Surprise Visit from a Bearded Stranger Affords a Summing-up of a Well-spent Life

THE OTHER DAY I WAS GOING THROUGH SOME OLD LETTERS IN MY office in the Kohl Building when I heard a knock at the door. I opened the door and saw a husky young man, bearded, wearing an old shirt, blue jeans, and sandals. I thought maybe he was a hippie from Haight-Ashbury looking for a handout.

He introduced himself and said, "Mr. Samish, I'm a political science major at the University of California across the bay, and I'd like to talk to you."

Well, he sounded like a nice fellow even if he did look like a bum. So I invited him in and we sat down in my office. He came right to the point.

"Mr. Samish, I'm writing a paper for my upper-division poli sci course on your activities as a lobbyist in California," he said.

"My, my!" I said. "I feel very complimented."

"Maybe you won't be when you see what I write about you," he said bluntly.

"Oh?"

"Yes, sir. You see, I've been doing some research in the library. You are mentioned in an incredible number of books, in every history of California, in fact."

"And those books say I was a son of a bitch?"

"Not in those words. Let me cite some references." He opened up his notebook and started riffling through the pages. Then he began reading: "For instance, in *The Politics of California* by Farrelly and Hinderaker, it says that there were good lobbyists and bad lobbyists in Sacramento."

"And I was one of the bad lobbyists?"

"Yes, sir. That book quotes from the Philbrick Report."

"Oh, yes. Philbrick the Bug."

"Sir?"

"Nothing—go ahead."

"Here's this from the Philbrick Report: 'This "fourth branch" of government represented by the Samish type of lobbying is responsible not to the public but only to individuals or interests able to pay high fees. It operates in great secrecy—secrecy so great that neither the public nor the regularly constituted agencies of the government, nor, on occasion, the fee-paying clients know what the lobbyist is doing.' End of quote."

"Very interesting. What else have you discovered in your research?"

"This from *Big Wayward Girl* by Herbert L. Phillips: 'He'—meaning you—'was a fascinating, almost incredible figure who worked his little miracles in California politics for a very long time and left an indelible mark on numerous phases of legislation in which he was hired to interest himself.'"

"Yes, I have Herb's book," I said, taking it from a shelf. "Here's what Herb also wrote: 'Samish unquestionably exerted great pressure leverage. Oddly enough, though, he was not necessarily the most potent lobbyist in Sacramento in terms of effective, restrained operations or from the standpoint of huge and powerful interests represented. . . . The legislative interests of the major utilities, the insurance companies, the oil cor-

porations and other important financial institutions have seldom been poorly served by their lobby spokesmen . . ."

"Yes, sir, I realize that. But to continue. In *California: An Interpretive History*, Walton Bean says that the song 'Mexicali Rose' struck your fancy and you got the composer elected to the assembly."

"I got to plead guilty to that," I admitted.

"And later Jack Tenney got angry with you and said you were a Communist."

The young man seemed surprised when I burst out laughing. "Is that amusing?" he asked.

"I think so," I replied, wiping my eyes. "You would too, if you knew that bum."

"This," he continued, "is from the Kefauver Committee Report: 'The strange tale of the part played by an almost unbelievable character, Arthur H. Samish, in the California picture nearly defies description. Mr. Samish can safely be called "Mr. Big" in California.'"

"He was a fine gentleman, Senator Kefauver. And a good judge of character."

"I could quote many other references to you from books and magazine articles. For instance, the *Collier's* articles, 'The Secret Boss of California.'"

"Yes, I've heard of them," I said.

"Instead of going over all this old stuff, I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"Go ahead."

"How would you define a lobbyist?"

"A lobbyist is one who ably and properly qualifies to represent industry or any other organization before a legislative body. He is a short-cut man."

"'A guy who gets things done'?"

"That's right. That's what they called me."

"But how could you defend the way you 'got things done'?"

"Defend my methods? I never felt compelled to. I wasn't

one of those guys who wined and dined a senator and then expected a favor in return. I never did any of that. The guys who did made me sick. And I had nothing but contempt for any legislator who could be influenced by a few drinks and a steak dinner."

"But you obviously wielded great power. How did you manage it?"

"Very simple, young man. I selected and I elected."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that. I selected the candidates that I thought would be agreeable to my clients, and I saw that they got elected. And if they didn't behave, I saw that they got unelected."

The young man with the beard shook his head. "That's not right, Mr. Samish," he said. "It's undemocratic."

"I make no excuses," I said. "I was doing a job for my clients, and I did it damn well. I was the highest-priced lobbyist in the business, and I delivered. And I operated within the law. I don't think I did anything wrong."

"But I still say it was undemocratic," he insisted.

"I can't argue on that score. But maybe I did accomplish something."

"What was that?"

"You remember what I told Velie at the end of his articles?"

"You mean about how the people of California could get rid of people like Artie Samish?"

"Yeah. I told him the people would have to pay more attention to their elected representatives. Maybe they're doing that now. At least the legislature can attract a better kind of lawmaker. When I was in Sacramento, the senators and assemblymen were getting \$1,200 a year. Now they're paid \$19,200, and they have fancy offices, cars to drive, paid staffs, and all the frills."

"Then perhaps a man like Art Samish could not operate today in Sacramento the way he used to."

"Probably not. But I wouldn't want to."

"Why not?"

"No fun. Goddammit, I had fun when I was up there in Sacramento. I whooped it up. I had a helluva time."

The young man from Berkeley couldn't understand that. Like so many in his generation, he didn't know what it was like to whoop it up just for the hell of it. They're all so dead serious about everything. I feel sorry for them.

He folded up his notebook and put away his pen and went back to the university. God knows what he wrote about me.

After he had gone, I sat at my desk and gazed out on that wonderful view of San Francisco. The late afternoon fog was starting to swoop in through the Golden Gate and the tops of the bridge had disappeared. The talk with the bearded young man had started me thinking about some of the great old times. The reason for this book is to share them with you, the reader.

Why did I tell my story, after all the years of keeping it to myself? As I told you before, it was time to raise hell and have fun. After all, every man in politics is entitled to his last hurrah.

Hurrah.

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