

From Stephanie Gray, interview by Suzanne Junod, Ronald Ottes, and Robert Tucker, 11 April 2000:

SG: So from Puerto Rico, after two years, we moved back to San Francisco because my husband was going into private practice there. And Bill Hill was there, and I went back there as a CAO. Let's see. One of the things that was happening then is food labeling. So one of the fun things I had to take charge of, almost immediately after getting back, was setting up the food labeling hearings with Don Kennedy. Those hearings were so popular that from a schedule of two days' testimony, we had to extend him to three days. You know, I thought of all kinds of things like, what if we have an earthquake, we've got to train our folks to get the people out of the hearing and so on. But what I didn't think of, because we didn't think so much about it in those days, is security, other kinds of security. One of the men testifying, who looked a little strange, walked in with a briefcase, sat down at the table, put the briefcase down, and opened it up, and then you could see fear on the faces of the whole panel, Don Kennedy and whoever the other folks were. People were literally looking over their shoulder for where the door was. And I was thinking, "Oh, my god. Why didn't I think of that?"

But he opened it up, and he pulled out a green banana to complain about the quality of bananas. (Laughter) So that was kind of funny.

RO: These were the regional hearings that they were holding.

SG: Yes.

SJ: What was the major feedback the agency was getting, at least in your interpretation, on that coast as far as the food label? Did consumers have an idea of what they wanted?

SG: Consumers wanted food labeling, and I think they were not organized about what they wanted because there were all different kinds. But they wanted food labeling, they distrusted food, and industry was unilaterally opposed to food labeling. But, you know, that's one of the differences in the agency then and now to me. Don Kennedy said, "We're going to have food labeling," and we had food labeling. It turned out to be I think a very good thing for food industry now, because people are interested, they're more sophisticated, and so on.