

Chapter 1

Rain tapped on the window of the limousine as Billy Dale took a swig from his vodka bottle, wiped the sweat from his bearded stubble, and blew out a puff of smoke. The burning embers of the roach clasped between thumb and forefinger glowed in the backseat's dim light as he cleared his lungs of the pot's incense and began to laugh and cough at the same time.

As the stretch barreled through the showers that were drowning O'Farrell Street on the hazy, wet Election Night, Billy glanced out the window just as the car passed The SwingTop Bar at O'Farrell and Polk.

"Ya see that place?" Billy asked the driver as he attempted to navigate the foggy, wet street. "When I first came to San Francisco, I couldn't afford to go in there. Now they're buying me drinks."

The driver couldn't even respond. He was too busy trying to keep from driving on to the sidewalk.

Billy didn't care. He just laughed, took another drink, and smiled.

Tonight was a big night for him. A big night for his career. A big night for San Francisco. And a big night for victory. You could almost sense it in the air as the Pacific Ocean breezes whirled through the city, crashing with the raindrops and providing a mist into the Bay Area night.

There was a feeling that things were changing. That victory was at hand. That something strange had happened. Billy felt it. The city's political elite felt it. Even the limo driver knew something was happening.

Billy had pulled off what could be arguably the biggest upset in the city's history. With his guidance, determination and, at times, downright dirty tricks. He had taken out one of the city's political heavyweights and replaced him with a virtual unknown.

Mayor William Carlson, the former state senator who had ruled as San Francisco's most powerful political boss for 12 years -- first as a deal-making genius in Sacramento and then as the city's iron-clad leader -- had lost. It was only 10 p.m., but the initial data already showed that Carlson was being ousted by a two to one margin.

Political commentators would blame Carlson's arrogance, his failure to counter-attack Dale's attacks, and even his inability to turn the city around for his loss.

But the truth was that it was Billy who had turned the voters against Carlson and put his man in office through sheer deceit, trickery, and some good old-fashioned dirty campaigning.

That man he put in was Jack Callahan.

Callahan had served as San Francisco police chief for 10 years. Although he had succeeded in driving crime down and putting more officers on the street, he had not made a big name for himself. He had never before run for political office and had never even been interested in local politics until Billy came to him.

Billy, who took revenge as a serious business, had made it his cause for three years to get Carlson out of office. He got mad after the mayor used a

technicality in the 1988 election to keep one of Billy's best clients, then-Supervisor John Gilbert, from running for municipal judge.

Carlson was a longtime friend of Judge Harold Weeds, against whom Gilbert was running, and had become nervous when Weeds began slipping in the polls. The mayor owed Weeds a lot of favors for his help in squashing a long list of charges against Carlson in recent years, ranging from arrests of prostitutes that Carlson frequented to dismissing cases that involved Carlson's friends and deputy mayors.

Although the judge had never had to intervene in cases involving the mayor himself, Carlson liked having him there just in case.

So when that election began to turn against Weeds and in favor of Gilbert, the mayor took action. He deployed three deputy city attorneys to find a loophole, an infraction, something in the election code that could keep Gilbert out.

The investigation found that Gilbert had been registered in two places for more than five years. In addition to regularly voting in San Francisco, Gilbert had also voted in Oakland, where his cousin, Danny, was on the city council. When Carlson got a hold of that information, Weed's people submitted it to a judge who ruled that Gilbert was ineligible.

After the election, Billy Dale vowed to get even with Carlson. "Even if I have to tear this city apart to do it," he said the night Weeds won his seat again.

Billy thought about that night three years ago as the driver turned the corner at Powell Street, punched the gas pedal and roared up the hillside street toward Nob Hill. When the stretch turned a corner and pulled in front of the Fairmont Hotel, Billy acted like it was his hotel, his palace, his night to shine.

The rain showers continued as the black, stretch car came to a halt in front of the hotel known for hosting everyone from kings to presidents to rock stars. The flags of many nations that adorned the magnificent building's front facade flapped in the windy rain as the driver ran around to Billy's door, bounced his shoe through a puddle and clutched the shiny metal door handle with a wet grip.

As the door opened, a cloud of smoke blew out of the car ahead of Billy, who stumbled a bit as he stepped on the sidewalk, but was able to gain his balance without a fall.

Even before he got out of the car, a swarm of television crews and reporters had surrounded the limo's door, ready with questions and inquiries about what had occurred that night.

"Ain't it great?" Billy told the throng of news crews, friends, and political hangers-on who would listen as he stepped forward. "This is what democracy is all about."

Billy shoved past the reporters. He didn't like to talk to news people unless he was out to complain about a story they had done on him or an attack a political rival had made.

His critics and supporters had both said that that was his power as a political consultant. He could hold back and let his candidates shine by themselves, but also jump up and attack others when needed.

“It’s our own art of thrust and parry,” said Billy, who among his varying hobbies, had taken up fencing. “It’s like any organized duel. You don’t attack unless provoked, but you provoke when necessary.”

The doorman, who knew Billy well from his many Fairmont Hotel private parties, opened the tall, golden doors for Billy and ushered him through the main lobby. The hotel’s infamous oil paintings and brass fixtures towered overhead as he turned right and headed toward the grand ballroom.

Billy’s tux was pure Pierre Cardin. But after the night he had had, it looked as disheveled as any bum’s ten-year old suit. He stopped at the nearest mirror and adjusted his tie, tried to tuck in the wrinkled shirt, and even spit-shined his rain-weathered shoes. His gut stuck out as usual and the chubby cheeks he had had since birth pouted out.

Billy had always tried to look good, despite the fact that his weight and his health were not good. He had been diagnosed HIV positive a year earlier and had only recently taken steps to try to eat better. Still, his appearance was rough.

Most of the young guys he romanced acted as if they didn’t mind his messy, less-than-sexy look. Most were magnetized enough by his awesome power, both in the political world and in the personal approach to other people. He had an assurance, a self-confidence, and an arrogance that even his rivals would attest to.

His recent rise to the top of San Francisco’s power elite also had helped him find good-looking, young men during his strolls through the bars on Polk Street or in The Castro District - the city’s gay mecca.

As Billy’s mind wandered in 100 different directions on this night, he began to almost jog toward the ballroom with excitement. As he neared the front door, more television cameras waited, along with political supporters and friends.

Billy’s classic smile greeted them.

15 flights up, in one of The Fairmont’s most expensive suites, sat the victor who garnered Billy Dale’s spoils that night.

Jack Callahan was never much of a drinker. During his days as a cop, and even later as chief, he had stuck to a rare glass of wine with dinner and actually preferred 7-Up or a Coke over hard booze. Growing up in a family of alcoholics had kept him away from the hard stuff and often frightened him about the dangers it could possess.

But on this night, Jack was in a different form. The champagne flowed and he smiled an innocent grin as he sat on the bed with his wife, Glenda, and watched the television reports.

Channel 4’s reporter had just come on and announced that, with 65 percent of the vote in, Jack had claimed 55 percent to Carlson’s 45 percent in the two-man runoff election. He glanced over at Glenda and gave her a friendly squeeze with his arm. Jack’s brother, and deputy chief, Phil, came over to give him a hug and kiss Glenda’s cheek.

“Looks like you did it, Jackie boy. Looks like you pulled it off,” Phil said, with a cigar puffing out the side of his mouth.

Jack didn't say anything. He just smiled and felt a shiver down his back.

The longtime cop who had grown up on the Mission District's streets in the late 50's, back when it was a predominantly working class Irish area, had never even dreamed of becoming a politician. The second of five boys, he had strong, traditional values of work and family, despite being the son of alcoholics. His parents had always fought the booze, but still managed to raise their boys properly after giving up drinking when Jack was a teen.

His goal had always been to be a street cop, marry a good woman and live out his days in the city where he was born. He had attained part of that dream as a rising young star in the department. After only five years as a patrolman, Jack became a sergeant in 1969 and went on to a lieutenant's post two years later. After a succession of promotions, he found himself appointed chief in 1980 when former chief Leo Pendelton was killed in a bizarre traffic accident.

Mayor Bella Williams, who went on to become a U.S. Senator, had appointed him because of his family man image and straight-arrow approach. Williams, who had taken office only a year earlier after the tragic murder of former Mayor Kit Lange, wanted someone who would not draw too much criticism during her first term.

Jack was the perfect choice. By the time Williams ended her two terms as mayor in 1987, crime was down 30 percent and more than 200 new officers had been added to the police ranks. Williams and Callahan had also orchestrated the hiring of more gays, women, and minorities to the department, as well as appointing a string of new minority captains and deputy chiefs.

When Carlson ran for mayor the first time in 1987, after Williams left, Jack had actually supported him and endorsed him, saying the two could work well together to keep the city going.

But during his time as chief, Jack's personal life had also fallen apart. His first wife, Jackie, had not wanted to move into the city, which was a requirement for the police chief of San Francisco. The couple, who had been married since Jack's first year on the force, had always lived in Half Moon Bay, the scenic, quiet, seaside town about 50 miles south of San Francisco.

Jackie, who had grown up in the small town and knew everyone by name, despised the big city. After a year-long separation in 1985, the couple divorced six months later.

Jack did not meet Glenda until a year before the mayoral race of 1991 began. Although Jack had not yet entertained the idea of running, he had begun to socialize more with some of the political heavyweights, including Billy Dale and his columnist friend, Mike McLean. McLean, who wrote for the weekly, neighborhood newspaper, *The Advocate*, had once written a glowing column about Jack's police chief accomplishments.

McLean called Jack "The most honest cop in a city of dishonest cops." While the dishonest reference had irked most on the force, the accolades for Jack turned his head.

The two began to have dinner together often and McLean started taking Jack around to parties with Billy Dale and other political leaders. It was at one such gathering in 1990 at the posh Star's Restaurant that Jack met Glenda.

Glenda Pullman Oberlin had been a banking wizard for 15 years. The chief financial analyst for Krugler Johnson Trust, the west coast's leading commercial bank, Glenda had broken many glass ceilings in her industry, and reached a place of prominence for herself in recent years.

But for the social ladder-climber who thrived on status and power, that wasn't enough. She knew that San Francisco's power lied in its political machine almost as much as in its corporate honchos. If she could get her hand in the city government power structure, she thought, her status would rise immeasurably.

So it was not by accident that she had a friend of Jack's introduce her to the popular police chief that night. Although Jack was 12 years older than Glenda, she still was drawn to his potential. Everyone in town knew that Jack would be ripe to run for some kind of office in the coming elections of the 90s. Be it sheriff, assemblyman or a member of the Board of Supervisors -- San Francisco's city council -- he definitely had a future.

Glenda wanted to latch on to the future and set her sights on Jack. By the end of the night, she had gotten him to drive her home and stay the night. For six months after that she was with him all the time, and at every major social function. The two were married just a week before Jack announced his campaign for mayor.

As the couple sat on the bed in the Fairmont Hotel suite, Glenda grinned a sinister smile at the television set. Jumping from channel to channel to watch all of them announce her husband's impending victory, she wallowed in the excitement and power that it evoked.

As the city's first lady, she would have access to all the social events, the major dinners and parties, and the attention that only the powerful can have. She put her arms around Jack and kissed him hard. As she hugged him, her eyes wandered out the window to the view of the Transamerica building and the dark, rainy streets. In the distance, she could see the dome of City Hall. The thought of that place under her control gave her both an adrenaline rush and a sexual excitement.

"It's all ours," she told Jack. To herself she whispered, "It's all mine!"

While Jack and his friends celebrated in their suite and the victory party in the ballroom below got underway, one man across the street in the nearby Mark Hopkins Hotel was not as happy.

William Carlson, who had worked his way up from the son of a grocery store clerk in Oakland to become an assemblyman, a state Senator, and eventually the most powerful mayor of San Francisco, was about to meet the political defeat of his life.

Carlson, who had managed to knock down Billy Dale three years earlier, had just been knocked out of his own political kingdom. Through Billy's trickery, deceit and hardball campaigning, and Carlson's own arrogance and failure to

strike back, Carlson had been blown out of an election that all critics one year earlier were ready to hand to him.

Carlson sat alone in the three-room suite. He had ordered everyone out an hour before and was ready to go down to admit defeat. The former Golden Gloves boxer and one-time cab driver had been a master at fighting back. He had never lost an election, though, and he did not know how to handle it.

The incumbent sneered at the television reports as he switched from channel to channel and saw his hopes diminish with the increased returns. Carlson also cursed the reporters whom he had been blaming for digging up dirt on his past, his messy divorce, and his alleged ties to Nevada organized crime leaders.

But, even as he shouted obscenities toward the press as their faces appeared on the television screen, he knew that the man to blame was Billy Dale. Along with McLean, it had been Billy who carefully orchestrated the line of negative press about Carlson. Although some of the stories were stretched to fit Billy's needs, many of the items about Carlson's weekend retreats to Vegas and Reno to meet with underworld people were genuine.

While most in City Hall had long known about the mayor's side trips to visit some of the casino industries most notorious bosses, the local beat reporters had not bothered to track down the reports. Since the city's two newspapers regularly backed Carlson and had endorsed him for every election in which he had run, including this one, editors had not pushed their reporters to go after Carlson.

In fact, the daily papers' investigative pieces had been more about Callahan and efforts to discredit him. Most of the stories, however, had little substance to really sway people's views in the face of such outlandish accusations against Carlson.

It had been Billy Dale, with the help of Mike McLean and The Advocate, who had succeeded in putting out enough dirt on Carlson to steer the electorate in Callahan's favor.

Carlson crushed a beer can in his hand and threw it out the window as he remembered the dirty campaign. His mind went back and his face flushed as he thought about Billy celebrating next door. He continued to rage as the reports came in.

About 20 blocks south someone else also watched the television reports and spouted his own anger. Tim Cross, editor of the San Francisco Journal, was watching television reports as well and not liking what he saw.

The Journal, the city's afternoon newspaper, had been under fire from its parent company, Mack Corporation, to do everything possible to keep Carlson in office. Mack, one of the city's largest development firms, was trying to get approval for construction of the city's biggest retail/residential complex on 600 acres south of the Bay Bridge in the former Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard.

The development would have 3,000 condominiums and apartments, office space and a myriad shops, services and entertainment centers. The project

would be a cash cow for Mack, which had taken a bath on a string of projects in the 1980's and was hanging its hopes on the development.

With Carlson in office, Mack chairman and Journal publisher Donald Grossman knew he would have approval from the Planning Commission assured. Since six of the seven commissioners had been Carlson appointees, their vote was locked in.

But if Callahan came in, he could appoint four new commissioners, all of whom would likely reject the project to get back at Mack and The Journal for endorsing his rival. Callahan had been the target of regular attacks from The Journal during the campaign, which attempted to paint him as a flunky cop with no leadership ability and a right wing approach to law enforcement.

"If Jack Callahan becomes mayor, the diversity and liberal values that have made San Francisco a welcoming home to all outsiders will be destroyed and replaced with the Gestapo tactics and military-style enforcement that we've seen in the days of Adolf Hitler's Germany," The Journal had written in an editorial just two weeks earlier. "For San Franciscans seeking an even-handed approach to government and law enforcement, Jack Callahan is all thumbs."

Even for the mild-mannered, low-key Callahan, the editorial had been a hard shot.

Tim Cross knew it as he followed the news reports and he also knew it when Grossman himself had come to his office and demanded that the paper "get Bill Carlson re-elected."

Cross knew that his position at the paper was riding on the outcome of the election. After overseeing a five-part series The Journal had published on a local health maintenance organizations operation, which drew a libel lawsuit costing the paper \$750,000 in legal fees, Cross had nearly been fired.

When Grossman relayed his latest order for a Carlson victory, he had also reminded Cross of the financial problems the paper, and Mack, faced due to the HMO lawsuit. If Carlson lost and its big development project went down, the paper's future and Cross' job would be in trouble.

Slamming his fist down on the desk, Cross yelled for a news assistant to bring him coffee. When the young intern left, Cross pulled out a bottle of Malibu Rum and a container of aspirin. He plucked the pills in his mouth, downed a shot of the rum and settled in with his coffee. He knew there was a long night ahead and he began plucking the keys on his keyboard for the editorial in which he would congratulate Jack Callahan and urge all residents to get behind the city's new mayor.

Next door to the Journal were the office's of San Francisco's morning newspaper, the larger, more successful San Francisco Bulletin, which dominated the city's newspaper market and was seen as the paper of record.

On the sixth floor newsroom, in the corner office that he had occupied for 15 years sat Bulletin editor J.C. Townsend. About 10 years older than his counterpart at the Journal, Townsend was a smaller, calmer man. Still, he was just as upset at the night's developments as the younger, angrier Cross.

Townsend, who was known for the rocking chair he kept in his office for afternoon coffee breaks, tipped back in the pine-framed chair while listening to news reports from one of the city's two all-news radio stations -- KLSF. Townsend grumbled as KLSF City Hall reporter Jane Leonard reported the disappointing news.

"It looks as though Mayor Carlson's chances for re-election are all but gone," Leonard said. "As of 10:45 p.m., with 55% of the ballots counted, Carlson has only 43% of the vote to challenger Jack Callahan's 57%. KLSF is predicting that Callahan will win the election by a comfortable margin."

With that, Townsend stopped rocking and leaned forward. He flicked an ash off of the cigarette that had been burning in his hand and stuck it in his mouth. The chair rocked back as he stood up and headed toward his desk.

Blowing a puff of smoke out of his mouth and glancing out at the rainy streets below, Townsend sat down and rifled through the wire copy that was on his desk. He snuffed out the cigarette in a nearby ashtray and got up to get his raincoat.

Stepping out in to the newsroom, Townsend heard the clatter of keyboards, the blare of television, and a distant laugh of a group arguing over what the headline for the mayoral victory should be.

Instead of taking the elevator for the long trek to the street, Townsend headed down the stairs, almost tripping twice. He did not want to chance running into one of the publishers or owners.

The Ingle Family, which had owned the Bulletin since it started in 1855, and now ran a media empire consisting of five television stations, four radio stations and the influential S.F. Magazine, was one of the most powerful families in the Bay Area.

Charlie Ingle, the gambler who won the newspaper's original building in a poker game more than 100 years ago, had used it to push his political agenda and vision for city expansion for years. His editorials against crime and corruption had resulted in many of the tightest ethics laws and law enforcement efforts the city ever had.

He had also succeeded in helping to elect some of the city's most powerful officials, who in turn did everything to help the thriving newspaper gain more advertising business, expand related businesses, and maintain a stronghold on its newspaper base in the face of competition from The Journal and other, smaller newspapers.

So when the newspaper's current chairman of the board, Charlie Ingle's granddaughter, Emily, had pushed the Bulletin to support Carlson, Townsend knew it was a necessity.

Emily Ingle had reminded Townsend only a week earlier over a rather caustic lunch at One Market, the upscale waterfront restaurant, that Carlson's re-election was essential.

Everyone in the city's business community knew the link. Carlson's brother, Ronny, was vice president of marketing for Statler Markets, the Bay Area's largest chain of food stores and one of The Bulletin's leading advertisers.

Statler Market ads and inserts were the largest part of the Bulletin's Sunday paper and a major revenue source for the newspaper.

Statler Markets had hinted that they might pull out of newspaper advertising and switch to mail-based ads. Although the loss of one client would not completely devastate The Bulletin, it would put a tight hold on the company's finances, especially at a time when newsprint costs were rising and competition was growing.

Ronny Carlson had told Mrs. Ingle straight out that if his brother managed to hold on to his seat, the company would gladly remain a client. He even went so far as to say that Mayor Carlson would be willing to give more exclusives to The Bulletin, in an effort to boost the paper's competitive edge.

"You don't need to be told how important this is for us," Mrs. Ingle had said during her lunch with Townsend. "I know you understand that we will suffer greatly if this outcome is, well, disappointing."

As he stepped out into the dissipating rain and flung on his raincoat, Townsend recalled that conversation. He also recalled, with disdain, his efforts to go after Jack Callahan. He had sent several investigative reporters to dig up dirt on the longtime police chief. All they uncovered were some details about his divorce and accusations that his ex-wife had made about infidelity.

Although there was no proof that Callahan had cheated on his wife, the fact that the allegations had made it in to court records were enough for Townsend to play it up.

Using the divorce records, Townsend and the reporters helped paint a picture of Callahan as a womanizing, neglectful husband who dropped his wife and could not be trusted to be honest with residents.

But, when the stories became public, they backfired.

Callahan went on television with his children and friends and helped create an image of a victim of a failed marriage, instead of the instigator. Voters learned that it wasn't Callahan, but his first wife, Jackie, who pushed for divorce and made up the stories of infidelity to try to get a bigger settlement.

During one live television interview, Callahan actually asked voters to put themselves in his shoes. "What would you do if the woman you loved, supported and tried to build a life with had made up lies about you," the police chief said, with just a hint of a tear in his eye. "Haven't I been through enough?"

After the appearance, Callahan's polling numbers not only soared, but the incident actually helped put him over the top, some political pundits thought.

Townsend replayed the entire event in his mind while walking the half block to the Deadline Bar, the favorite watering hole of reporters and editors from both papers. The front door's bells clanged as Townsend entered the dark, smoky tavern. Because it was election night, the place lacked the usual swarm of reporters. A handful of writers he knew were scattered about, while the television blared more news reports of the evening's political changes.

The tired editor sat down at the bar, ordered a scotch and soda and leaned back to drink it.

Two cops were playing pool at one of the bar's two billiard tables, while what looked to be a prostitute and a cab driver negotiated a price. Next to them,

an older couple just sat and drank while trying to avoid looking at each other and two college-aged kids played quarters in the corner.

Townsend looked back at the bar as one of his favorite bartenders, Sammy Dilson, approached him.

“Rough night, J.C.?” the bartender said as he freshened his drink.

“I’d rather not talk about it,” Townsend responded.

But another editor who was gladly in the mood for talking about the night’s events was doing just that at the same time that J.C. Townsend began his drinking binge.

About two miles from the Journal and Bulletin offices, in the quieter, dirtier Tenderloin neighborhood stood the home of the San Francisco Reader - the city’s major alternative weekly.

Located in a three-story building that once housed San Francisco’s biggest, Barbary Coast brothel, The Reader was legendary for opposing nearly every major city government establishment policy and machine politics candidate.

Editor and publisher Danny Dugan, who grew up in New York City and cut his teeth as a street reporter for the former New York Herald, went out of his way to bash city politicians and support underdog candidates.

In the race for mayor, Dugan and The Reader had opposed both Callahan and Carlson and endorsed the lesser-known challenger, Supervisor Marie Alzeti. Alzeti, whose father, Carlo, had served as mayor for two terms in the early 1960’s, was a secondary candidate from the beginning.

Although many voters liked her liberal approach and affinity for the homeless, minorities, the poor and citizen’s rights, her often outlandish statements had irked some in recent weeks. While she had been president of the Board of Supervisors twice, her proposals on two major occasions had made her lose ground to voters.

The first downfall came two years earlier when Alzeti had proposed a 10% city income tax to fund a string of homeless shelters and programs for the poor. The proposal went to the ballot, but lost by a close margin. Many observers had blamed the loss on a statement Alzeti made during a television debate on the initiative, in which she bashed voters for not caring.

“If the people of San Francisco are so selfish that they won’t give up their expensive dinners, BMW’s and vacations so some downtrodden folks can have a decent life, than I am ashamed of this city.”

Since the comments also came on the heels of the 1989 earthquake, one of the city’s worst disasters, they hit a major nerve with many voters.

Alzeti also drew criticism when, in the final weeks of the mayoral race, she suggested that she would seek a city charter change to assure that 15 percent of the city’s budget would be set aside for funding programs in the city’s worst neighborhoods.

When that idea came out, several neighborhood groups jumped on Alzeti, and even some of her staunchest supporters pulled out, worried that she would radically change the city’s budget process and might deny the city valuable

resources such as police and fire protection, which are always hot-button issues in a city election.

Callahan and Carlson also used Alzeti's outlandish comments and unusual proposals to knock her down. In one debate, Carlson accused Alzeti of "letting your heart takeover your brain," and also called hers a "Robin Hood mentality that will lead San Francisco into a Sherwood Forest of depression, deficit spending, and instability."

Despite her wild comments and minimal chances for victory, The Reader had endorsed Alzeti and even helped her print campaign material in its offices.

As the election night tallies grew, Dugan became more and more upset that another establishment candidate with big-money backing and corporate support would be leading the city.

Dugan thought about that as he watched the returns on the banged-up black and white television that sat in the corner of his small, cramped, third-floor office and recalled the nasty, bitter campaign.

In its effort to give Alzeti even a chance at victory, The Reader had hit hard on Carlson's record of inaction for San Francisco's poor and downtrodden, while also attempting to paint a picture of Callahan's police department as a group of racist, homophobic thugs that took every chance to knock down the minorities and boost graft for itself.

Although The Reader had difficulty proving that Callahan or his officers had engaged in any underhanded enforcement that could be tied directly to the police chief, the paper had succeeded in raising suspicions about one incident - the death of a homeless man in Golden Gate Park.

About sixth months before Election Day, several homeless people who sleep in the park reported seeing three cops beat a fellow homeless person to death. When one newspaper wrote a story that a complaint had been filed by a witness and a city park maintenance worker had reported finding the body, The Reader took note.

After a three-week search, one reporter obtained a videotape from an anonymous resident that showed three cops, including Callahan's brother, Phil, giving the fatal blows to the dead man. Although Jack Callahan had not been chief for more than a year, a video of his brother and other cops who had previously been under his charge killing a homeless man would be devastating news.

Eventually, word got back to Callahan about the tape and he made a personal visit to the Reader's newsroom.

During a conversation with Dugan, Callahan made no bones about the fact that he would "make things very uncomfortable" for Dugan if any word of the tape made it into The Reader's next issue.

As usual Dugan ignored Callahan's warning and planned to publish the following week.

But, the next morning, the tape was gone and signs of a burglary were everywhere. The newspaper's front doors were broken into and the locks on Dugan's office door and desk had been smashed.

While about \$20 that had been in the desk drawer remained untouched, the videotape was gone.

Just minutes after discovering the tape had been taken, Dugan called Callahan and threatened to write the story anyway.

“Go ahead,” the chief said. “I’ll have a libel suit filed within an hour after the first issue hits the stand.”

Dugan knew he couldn’t write the story without proof, so the entire issue ended.

Still, Dugan remained determined that Callahan would not reach office without a fight. But, despite his strongest editorials and stories showing police brutality statistics on the rise, the new mayor was on his way in.

Dugan glared an angry stare, shut off the television and sat down at his typewriter. Even though newspapers had operated through computers for nearly 20 years, he still banged out his editorials on a 20-year-old manual typewriter. He had written his first freelance story on the machine and felt it was bad luck to write editorials on anything else.

Although he gladly edited copy on the computer, his strong superstitions forbade him from writing his editorials in any other way. As the clock above his desk hit midnight, he began work on yet another editorial. This one would slam Callahan even more than the previous ones. He considered it his duty to issue a warning to voters about what they should expect under the new mayor.

Chapter 2

The Fairmont Hotel ballroom shook with excitement that Election Night as returns continued to come in and Callahan’s supporters kept celebrating. Billy Dale strolled through the Grand Ballroom party accepting accolades from friends left and right as the night wore on and victory inched closer.

Supervisors, state officials, and even Senator Bella Williams were there to greet him.

Just as he was about to head toward the podium to take his place among the victors, he felt a slap on his back.

“Billy, you son of a bitch, how the hell are ya?” said the voice.

Billy turned around to see who it was and hugged the man with both arms.

“Jimmy, you bastard, do you believe this shit?” Billy said with a smile. “We got ‘em by the balls.”

Jimmy Min, the skinny owner and publisher of The Advocate and one of Billy’s best friends, grinned his trademark ear-to-ear smile and sipped the Mai Tai that was in his hand. The city’s youngest newspaper publisher at 32, and part of the most powerful Asian family in San Francisco, Jimmy had waited a long time for something like this.

Ever since his father, Sam, had come to the United States from China 40 years earlier, The Min family had made it their goal to take advantage of the opportunities of America.

As he hugged Billy and thought about the future of the city under a mayor who viewed The Advocate and the Mins as a force to be reckoned with, Jimmy also thought about how far his family had come and what his father had done to give him what he had.

Sam Min grew up on the streets of Beijing, a poor, but happy child. His father, a tailor, and his mother, who cleaned rooms in local hotels, had little to offer their three sons. But they always made sure to instill them with the values of honesty, hard work and love.

Those beliefs stuck with Sam until he was 12, the year his father was killed by gangsters who demanded that he turn over part of the earnings from his tailor shop to them. When he refused, they set fire to his shop while he was inside bound and gagged.

When he reached 18, Sam grabbed his first chance to come to the United States, hitching a ride on a cargo vessel bound for San Francisco. Once there, he got a job in a printing shop and worked day and night to print everything from fliers to restaurant menus.

When he reached 30, he took over the shop, buying out the owner and expanding with money he had saved over the years. Min Printing, which had been a struggling concern at the beginning, grew into a thriving business with Sam's ingenuity, hard work and, when necessary, hardball competitiveness.

He'd call and cancel orders for other printing shops, bribe police officers to tow his competitors' trucks and cite them for minor infractions, and once even convinced some workers at two other printing shops to strike for better hours and pay so that he could get their business.

"Success is about ingenuity, hard work and, when necessary, everything else," Sam once told his sons. "The rules are, there are no rules, but winning."

Eventually, Min Printing became the most successful printing shop in all of Chinatown and actually began to lure business from other neighborhoods in the early 1970s.

Sam Min was on top of his world.

But, to this immigrant from China who viewed the United States as the land of opportunity and a place to do it all, just running a successful business was not enough. Sam wanted to be a part of the power elite, have a say in the city and take control of things.

At that time, Chinatown did not have a place in local government. No Asians were on the Board of Supervisors or the Board of Education and the Asian community's influence at City Hall was minimal.

When Chinese merchants wanted any help for improvements, expansion or crime problems, city officials ignored them. Sam knew they needed a voice.

That's when he turned to news.

Chinatown had only one newspaper at the time, the weekly Chinatown Gazette. It was not a bad paper, but it included mostly small time news about merchant meetings, parades and local profiles. It never took on issues or put any heat on City Hall.

Sam knew it could be an outlet for his ideas and issues and a way to force city officials to come to his neighborhood's calling.

After arranging financing, and finding some investors from other, neighboring businesses, Sam bought the Chinatown Gazette and turned it around.

The weekly newspaper immediately doubled its audience by adding an English language edition to those already printed in Cantonese. That allowed Asians who spoke only English, and other city residents, to find out what was going on in Chinatown.

It also allowed the mainstream press and the television and radio stations to see the issues and problems of Chinatown. Sam soon began sending a free copy of each issue to the print and broadcast mediums throughout the Bay Area.

Then Sam went to work.

The very first issue attacked the work of police in the Central District police station, which covered Chinatown. Sam wrote about how crime in the area was the worst of the Central District neighborhoods and slammed the city for assigning no bilingual officers.

“As residents of this community named for our homeland, we are entitled to equal protection and equal access to that protection,” Sam wrote in an editorial for the first edition under his ownership. “We demand it.”

The issue took off citywide after three television stations used the item for their own stories and also attacked City Hall for failing to provide equal coverage for Chinatown, and for ignoring the need for bilingual officers.

In two days, then-Mayor Clayton Barlow was forced to address the issue at a press conference. He vowed to increase patrols and hire at least five bilingual officers, who began work just a month later.

Sam was ecstatic, but he didn't stop there. Over the next year, The Chinatown Gazette took on every issue known to Chinatown, including rent control, property values, better access for tourists, school deterioration, and local health care.

In each case, Sam's coverage opened up the Chinatown issues to the entire city, forcing City Hall to take notice and causing other major news outlets to cover the topics.

Sam's biggest influence came when he helped elect the first Asian to the Board of Supervisors, Tom Chin. Although he had held a variety of appointed positions on city commissions, Chin had run for the board only once before. But when district elections came to San Francisco in the late 1970's, Chin found the best chance to join the board.

San Francisco had always elected board members at-large, which meant through a citywide vote. But, after a group pushed a ballot measure forward that allowed board members to be elected by district, the field was open for neighborhood leaders, such as Chin, to make the leap.

With strong backing from Sam, Tom Chin won by nearly a 2-to-1 margin, giving Sam more prestige and a fixed ally at City Hall. With Chin's help, legislation was passed giving minority businesses, such as Sam's, preferences for city contracts. In less than a year, Sam got the contracts for dozens of City Hall printing jobs, as well as printing the official Chinese-language public notices for issues that related to Chinatown in The Gazette.

In two years from the date that Chin was elected, Sam's profits for his shop tripled and the newspaper's revenue more than doubled. He made enough to move his wife and two boys from Chinatown to the more residential Sunset District and expanded his circulation to include all Asian neighborhoods in San Francisco, not just Chinatown.

But that still wasn't enough. Sam wanted it all.

Despite his rise in political influence and substantial wealth, Sam still was at the mercy of Chinatown's gangs. The ruthless mobs that shook down Chinese businesses, paid off Central Station cops and undercut some businesses with their black market products were taking still more profits out of Sam's pocket.

One of the most powerful gangs was the Lee Ming Crew, whose territory included the offices of Sam's shop and the Chinatown Gazette. From the first day he opened, Sam had been forced to pay off Lee Ming and its leader, Ted Wong, every month.

Although most business owners paid the underworld boss as just another business expense, Sam had always hated the shakedowns. He looked at them as cheap hoods who were using their strength to hurt their own people.

"I'm sick of these sonsabitches," he would tell his wife, Rose. "As soon as I have enough pull, I'm going to tell them to take a hike."

So, just a few days later, when Lee Ming's collection man came around as usual, Sam told him he wasn't paying up. The collector argued, but eventually left.

The next day, Wong himself came by just as Sam was locking up The Gazette offices.

"Hi Sam, I hear we have a little problem," said Wong, who sported an expensive Italian suit, dark black shoes and one of his trademark fedoras. "I hear you don't want to do your part."

Sam gave a dirty look and sneered. "I am doing my part, I just don't want to give into your sleaze anymore, that's all," he said.

Wong didn't move a muscle, he just smiled. "I'd reconsider if I were you," Wong said and then walked away.

Sam sat there thinking for a minute as dark descended on the cold, quiet stretch of Grand Avenue that housed his entire business world. He realized that he might be pushing too far too fast, and didn't need to jeopardize his livelihood and family like this. He decided he would continue paying Wong off, but with a side plan in place.

The next day, he ordered his two best reporters to dig up everything they could on Lee Ming and Wong. He knew there had to be something on that underworld leader that could make good front page news.

For weeks, the reporters dug through tax records, business license receipts, crime statistics, and even immigration papers looking for some scrap of evidence to link to the crime boss.

After a month of investigative work, the reporters had come up with what they wanted. It seemed that Wong had paid no taxes on two nightclubs he owned, and had not paid his own income taxes for three years.

But Sam waited before making anything public. He knew this had to be done carefully and ordered his reporters to go to the nightclubs, which were known as drug dens, and find proof that drug deals were being made.

He knew that illegal drug sales would make such a story more appealing, and more damaging to Wong. The reporters went to both clubs every night for two weeks. Nothing.

The drug action was done so secretively and with such protection that they couldn't infiltrate.

Sam was fuming. "Well, then, write it anyway," he said.

Sam ordered the reporters to use the tax evasion information, but also write a separate piece about how they had bought drugs at the nightclubs on several occasions.

The reporters reluctantly did so and, in two days, the three-part series was ready.

When the following week's issue of the Chinatown Gazette hit the streets, the headline "Chinatown's Dirty Laundry" was smack on Page One.

Underneath it, the subheadline said "How Chinatown's dirtiest gang has ignored City Hall and funneled drugs to your kids."

The series detailed all aspects of Wong's underground empire of drugs and illegal sales of stolen goods, as well as his spotty tax history.

When city officials got wind of the stories, they launched their own investigation, which eventually included the FBI and the U.S. Justice Department. In the end, Wong himself was arrested, along with three of his top deputies. All four received 10 years in prison when the trials ended a year later.

Sam became a hero. Chinatown's image as a good place to live and shop improved and even fellow newspaper editors praised his work. It seemed like Sam was on his way to being a major political force in San Francisco.

Then it all ended.

About a week after Wong and his under bosses were sentenced, Sam received a call from Central Station that the alarm in his store had gone off. He quickly drove to Chinatown to see what happened and found the door locked up as before, but the alarm's loud clang-clang continued.

As he slid open the front gate and unlocked the front door, Sam noticed that all the lights were out. Whenever he closed up, Sam usually left at least one back light on for the police who toured the area after hours. But on this night, they were pitch black.

With the loud clang-clang in his ears, Sam stumbled toward the back to the heavy, iron alarm shut-off switch. Just as he reached the back, he noticed two, dark figures standing in the corner.

He recognized both of them. One was Chad Wong, Ted Wong's cousin, and the other he knew as Simon Pang, one of Ted's top neighborhood collectors.

Before Sam could say anything to the two men, they each pulled out a .38 caliber revolver and fired.

The handguns spit sparks and fired as the clanging bells of the shop's alarm continued to sound in the cool, dark Chinatown night. The alarm sound muffled much of the gunfire and drowned out most of its echo.

The bullets first hit Sam in the stomach, causing him to lurch forward, then one hit him in the head. He dropped as the last bullet struck his temple and fell over, with his right hand still stretched out.

As Sam fell, his arm struck the alarm switch and its clang-clang ended at the moment Sam hit the ground. He died almost instantly.

Jimmy Min, who had just finished college a year earlier, immediately took over operation of The Gazette at his mother's request. For several years he used the paper to continue his father's work of slamming City Hall and promoting city issues.

But Jimmy also continued to attack the Chinese gangs, intensely following the trials of any members who were arrested, while also putting pressure on Central Station police to clamp down on gang activities.

Police never did bring charges against Sam Min's killers, which infuriated Jimmy. He was never sure if it was a police cover-up or just bad investigating.

Years later, Jimmy took the profits from The Gazette and Min Printing and bought The Advocate. As he expanded the family's journalism empire, he remained true to his father's mission of promoting neighborhood and minority issues, while also using the publications to gain political advantage.

When Jimmy purchased The Advocate, it had been a struggling, small publication that covered mostly the city's wealthier neighborhoods like Pacific Heights and Nob Hill. But, with Jimmy's funding and hard-edged approach, he built it into a political force that brought an alternative view for minorities and neighborhood issues.

By 1990, The Advocate had become a citywide newspaper that covered City Hall and neighborhood news. It was also the only free weekly delivered to each home at no charge.

The home delivery idea was Jimmy's and his alone. He realized that residents would more easily read a newspaper that was on their porch than in a newsbox near a coffee shop. He was right. Circulation jumped, as did advertising rates.

Eventually, Jimmy gained the same clout as every other free, alternative newspaper in San Francisco, while making his family giants in the Asian community.

His continued support of Tom Chin had elevated the former supervisor to the State Assembly and, eventually, the State Senate. He had also helped get two more Asians elected to the Board of Supervisors.

But, despite Jimmy's political marksmanship, The Advocate still did not have all the influence it could seek. What it needed to be a real player in town was a mayor. Getting someone elected mayor would be the boost to put the newspaper, and Min's family, over the top.

Jimmy knew this was the key.

Chapter 3

For The Advocate to play any kind of part in the election of a mayor, it would have to support someone that none of the other daily newspapers would back. If Jimmy's candidate could pull ahead and win, that person would be indebted to Jimmy. But, if The Advocate just supported an obvious winner that already had backing from the two dailies, his part would be lost.

Jimmy knew finding the right candidate and the right way to make him a winner would take some planning. Where to find someone who could be a viable player, but had not yet received enough support was tough. Jimmy began to search.

It was late December 1990 when Jimmy's efforts to recruit a candidate began. The mayor's primary election was less than 10 months away and Jimmy needed to act fast.

During their usual Friday morning breakfast together at Tiger's Coffee Shop in Glen Park, Jimmy and Billy Dale discussed the idea of pitching a candidate against Carlson. The incumbent mayor had had a strong record, which had been boosted by his leadership abilities that showed during the chaos that followed the devastating 1989 earthquake.

Both daily newspapers had published that historic shot of Carlson actually pulling a child out of a damaged home in The Marina District just hours after the quake.

He had also succeeded in gaining quick federal and state funds that helped the city rebuild most damaged portions within six months.

Still, Carlson had been in office as a state senator and mayor for a combined 12 years and some problems, such as homelessness, had increased.

Billy and Jimmy, who had been friends since meeting at a neighborhood political club meeting in 1984, pondered the idea.

Jimmy sipped his favorite tomato juice and munched on a piece of toast while Billy downed his trademark morning pancakes. The two remained in their own thoughts until Billy had an idea.

"The first thing we have to do is knock Carlson down," Billy said with a mouth full of food. "That guy is popular, but if we raised some issues that people haven't focused on, and found some dirt, it could happen."

Jimmy nodded his head and took a drink of orange juice as the waitress added more coffee to each of their cups.

"But what?" Jimmy asked. "The guy was a hero in the earthquake, crime is down and everyone is happy with him. We need something heavy, something that hasn't been touched on that could become an issue."

Both men knew, and had known for years, that San Francisco politics are like those in no other city.

Issues confront a variety of groups, from homeowners to gays to smalltime merchants to corporate giants to liberals to conservatives. No mayor can possibly please them all, so the best anyone can do is feed each one something now and then. In some cases, all you need is the appearance that you have confronted an issue. And if you confront it in a way that no one else has, and appear to satisfy everyone, that wins you votes.

Once, during a supervisor's campaign, Billy had given one of his proteges a key piece of advice. "Don't worry about what your guy actually does, just worry about what voters think he does," Billy had said. "That's what they cast ballots on."

Both Billy and Jimmy were pondering that idea as they ate. While they downed their morning feed inside the grungy, but friendly breakfast spot, a homeless man knocked on the coffee shop window and pointed to his mouth as if to indicate hunger. Jimmy waved nicely, but shooed him away.

Not a moment later, a smile crossed Jimmy's face.

As he looked up from his plate, he grinned at Billy, who thought for a minute and had the same reaction. The two didn't even have to say anything, they just ate faster.

Later that day, Jimmy called Mike McLean. McLean, a San Francisco native who had written columns for, and been fired from, nearly every newspaper in the Bay Area, was now working for The Advocate.

Although he had only been there for less than six months, his columns slamming City Hall on everything from parking spaces to clean streets had already turned some heads. His latest piece, bashing the supervisors for a midnight pay raise vote, had actually gotten a protest of 200 people to organize and picket City Hall. Although it did not stop the supervisors from keeping the higher salaries, it certainly made it hard for them to go to work.

This time, Jimmy had other plans for McLean. He wanted him to write a front--page column attacking the city's homeless problem and specifically targeting Carlson.

McLean, always game for a good newspaper brawl, was glad to oblige. But, he said he needed some statistics and a new effort to get rid of the homeless to make it worthwhile.

He got a hold of several homeless advocacy groups and asked them to give statistics on the increase in homelessness during Carlson's four-year term. He didn't tell them that he planned to use the information to attack the homeless. He said it would help their cause by bringing attention to the fact that there were so many homeless on the street.

He talked to the S.F. Homeless Alliance, Catholic Charities for the Homeless and Street People's Defense -- a group of lawyers that had recently formed to defend homeless people accused of crimes.

The combination of statistics showed that the number of homeless people had just about doubled between 1980 and 1990. That meant that it had grown from 5,000 to 10,000.

McLean had his hook. He wrote an editorial that slammed the city's elite for ignoring the plight of the homeless, but also ripped into the street people as "withered souls that litter our streets and sidewalks." His column also blamed Carlson, referring to him as "William the Ignorant," for ignoring the problem.

For most people, the homeless had always been accepted because of San Francisco's image as an open, diverse place where pretty much anything goes. And, since the 80's had been so profitable for most residents, the bums and street people had been more of a tolerated nuisance.

McLean's column caused a stir because, for the first time, the diverse, open view of San Francisco that had been sparked by the 1960's flower power movement was being challenged.

McLean was saying that, although the city was viewed as a haven for tolerance and anything-goes behavior, residents were sick of this problem and wanted a change.

As the earthquake's effect continued to linger on the economy and the overall financial health of the city had been dropping since the late 1980's Wall Street crash, the city's troubles were taking on more attention.

Jimmy Min and Mike McLean knew this. After the column ran, Jimmy took further action, getting Senator Chin to sponsor legislation in Sacramento that would provide additional state aid to cities that formed special police units to monitor the homeless and cite them for minor crimes such as sleeping in the parks, urinating outdoors, and even blocking doorways.

Most people hadn't cared about such petty incidents, but with homelessness becoming a hot new issue, the state law took on more attention.

Once the legislation was introduced, Jimmy ran his own personal editorial demanding that Carlson not only crackdown on the homeless, but direct his new police chief, Kelly Darren, to form the special unit to go after the homeless that would help bring in the extra state funding once the new legislation took effect.

It was brilliant.

Jimmy had found a sleeper issue and turned it into the hot topic of the day. Soon, several supervisors picked up the homeless debate and urged Carlson to go after the street people. Although most supervisors supported homeless rights, the pressure that had come from the few who wanted a crackdown was enough to keep the issue hot.

But Carlson wouldn't give in. The mayor and longtime public servant knew that this was Jimmy's game to gain attention and he also felt strongly that the homeless needed to be helped.

Reluctant to react at first, Carlson made no formal response. But when Senator Chin openly criticized Carlson for failing to act, the mayor could not stay silent.

During an unusually candid press conference in front of City Hall, Carlson openly attacked Chin's legislation and vowed "never to arrest someone for being poor, for having nowhere to live, and for trying to keep from freezing."

Carlson said the city should seek to find more places for the homeless to live and get them training and jobs before arresting them.

But, this played right into Jimmy's hands. The same day the mayor made those comments, Jimmy ordered his top reporter, Tammy Sharp, to check into how many homeless shelters and homeless beds the city had and how many it had in the recent past.

Sharp did the research and discovered that, under Carlson, the city had shutdown three homeless shelters in four years, eliminating 300 beds. Jimmy howled with delight and made that The Advocate's lead story two days later.

Now he not only could go after Carlson for his reluctance to clear the homeless off the street, but he could blame him for the fact that they had no where to go.

“Mayor Carlson claims to want to help the city's downtrodden by refusing to arrest them, but he himself has done more to harm their existence than anyone,” Jimmy wrote in an editorial that accompanied Sharp's story. “He is talking out of both sides of his mouth.”

The story and editorial drew raves. Soon, the two daily papers and The Reader took up the cause and even the homeless advocates, who had been backing Carlson for his refusal to clampdown on them, began to oppose him when they heard that he had shut their shelters down.

Television stations also covered the topic, as did talk radio, which couldn't keep up with the calls from residents slamming Carlson's flip-flop ways. He had real problems.

But the final attack was about to come. And Mike McLean was going to deliver it.

McLean liked to eat out almost every night. With a different friend or woman in tow, he traveled from restaurant to restaurant, downing his multiple martinis and partaking of the best steaks, seafood and ribs in town.

On one particular night, during the midst of the homeless debate, he ran into Jack Callahan and Glenda, who at that point was merely Callahan's newest beau. As the two chatted at the bar at Moose's, one of the city's newest trend spots, McLean got around to asking Callahan what he thought of the whole homeless thing.

Callahan, who had retired as chief just a year earlier, said he agreed that the police should crackdown on the homeless who break laws, but also thought they should be given more shelter space.

“I always ran into these guys when I was a patrolman, but now they are everywhere,” Callahan said during the conversation in the crowded bar. “You really need to straighten them up, but you can't kick 'em when they're down. That doesn't make sense.”

McLean liked what he'd heard. Callahan had always been popular in the department, but he seldom made his own news. He had kept order while he was chief and had quietly gone into retirement. In fact, when he left, he didn't even have the usual send-off dinner that the police officers association held as a tribute for retiring chiefs. Just a few drinks with some of this top deputies, and friends, was all Callahan had wanted.

But McLean thought then that Callahan could help their cause. He asked him to write a special column for The Advocate giving his views on the homeless situation.

Callahan thought a minute and, at first, declined. But, after some convincing from McLean, he agreed.

“That's great,” McLean said as he tossed back his third shot of Tequila. “And it can be whatever you want. Jimmy'll love it.”

When McLean met with Jimmy Min the next day and told him, the publisher was ecstatic.

“We will kick his ass,” said McLean. “A former chief who never took a stand on issues comes out of retirement to slam this guy, and we got him. That will really stir the pot.”

And stir it did. When Callahan’s column ran, it got the attention of all the city’s news outlets, which considered it a story simply because he had come out of retirement to say his piece.

What made it even more surprising was that Callahan had served as chief under Carlson for many years and had always supported him. For him to criticize his former boss really meant something.

“Mayor Carlson has the right idea, but has failed to do what is needed to make it work effectively,” Callahan wrote. “For him to let homeless people break the law on city streets and in city parks is bad enough. But for him to sit back and do nothing while their shelter space disappears is a crime in itself.”

The reaction was startling.

Talk radio shows began calling to ask Callahan to come on the air to fire back at the mayor. Both daily newspapers ran editorials that took the former police chief to task for hitting Carlson when Callahan himself had had the power to crack down on the homeless as chief, but didn’t.

The Reader, considered the most liberal of the city’s newspapers, also shot back, attacking Callahan for wanting more homeless arrests, but also criticizing Carlson for reducing homeless shelter space.

The issue had taken over the city and Jimmy Min was on top of the world.

His paper, which had been only a small neighborhood fluff rag, was now leading the charge on the issue of the day.

Editorials, letters to the editor, and McLean’s columns pushed the homeless issue during the first three months of 1991. Citywide, the struggle over whether the homeless should be allowed to roam free, be forced to be locked up, or be given more shelter space gripped the city.

Callahan was on more and more talk shows and news interview programs by the day, while Carlson could not get away from the issue. At every public function and news conference, the mayor was slammed with homeless questions.

When the Assembly and the State Senate passed Chin’s legislation and the governor signed it, the debate grew louder as neighborhood leaders pushed for the special police units to be organized against the homeless and homeless rights groups threatened to start daily protests if they were formed.

The battle was being waged on all sides and Carlson didn’t know what to do.

Then McLean dropped his bomb.

In a special column written on March 1, 1991, McLean and Jimmy took their efforts for an opposition to Carlson one step further, asking Callahan to run for mayor against him.

The column was one of McLean’s shortest ever and was headlined simply - Run, Jack, Run. In the piece, McLean urged Callahan to come out of retirement and take the mayor’s post so he could do what he had criticized Carlson for not

doing; Clear the homeless off the street with tougher law enforcement, but also expand shelter space for them at the same time.

“Jack Callahan knows what the police can do to stop the nuisance and harm that the homeless have caused,” McLean wrote. “But he also has the compassion to do it right. He won’t brush them under the city’s collective rug. He will take care of them.”

The column went on to urge Callahan to run and asked voters to write to The Advocate and other papers with their thoughts on a possible Callahan candidacy.

This was part of Jimmy and Billy’s set up.

The column didn’t just ask Callahan to run, it also asked voters to push him to run. That way, if enough support came forward, it would make it harder for Callahan to back out and easier for him to jump in without appearing egotistical.

He could rightly say that he had not had any intention of running, but “felt compelled to enter the race at the urging of others.”

And that’s exactly what happened.

Two weeks after the column ran, Callahan met with Jimmy, Billy and Senator Chin and announced privately that he would throw his hat into the ring. They set the announcement date for, what else, March 17, St. Patrick’s Day. And, to show his sincerity to the homeless plight, he staged the announcement inside Golden Gate Park, just a few feet from one of the largest homeless encampments.

“After much discussion with my family and friends and supporters, I have decided to enter the race for mayor,” Callahan said during the press conference, as representatives from newspapers and television stations as far away as Los Angeles and San Diego witnessed the event. “I believe that Mayor Carlson has done a good job, but has not seen fit to handle the growing homeless problem that now grips our city.”

The crowd of 100 or so supporters burst into applause and Billy and Jimmy grinned at each other.

“I also believe that San Francisco is ready for a strong hand, someone who knows law enforcement and can use it to clamp down on not only the homeless who break laws, but every other criminal in the city,” Callahan said. “But, I also vow to do it fairly, justly and in a way that harms no one.”

The crowd and the reporters ate it up.

Just three months after their coffee shop brainstorming session, Jimmy and Billy had not only struck a chord with residents over an almost sleeping issue, but they’d found a candidate humble enough to be trusted and strong enough to appear tougher than the current mayor.

Sure, crime was down, streets were safer, and most people were happy with the way the city was running under Carlson. But, show them an issue and tell them that they should believe in it, and find a candidate who appears more adept at solving it, and you have created a real mayor’s race.

Carlson couldn’t believe it. Here he had practically owned this town, had become a hero following the earthquake and had most of the Board of

Supervisors eating out of his hand and these two guys come along and blow it up in his face.

"This isn't going to be easy," he confided in a friend as the two watched Callahan's press conference on television that night. "I have a bad feeling about it."

With that, both sides set to work.

Carlson immediately increased his campaign preparations, meeting almost daily with his longtime campaign manager, Densely Hutchins, and formulating a strategy to get the campaign off the homeless issue and on to something else.

The two strategized and realized that they couldn't compete with Callahan on homeless concerns, so they needed to find something new. Something that could make Callahan's image as a law enforcement genius backfire on him.

Hutchins, who had effectively created issues for Carlson to win every previous race, knew the best offense was to put Carlson on the defense. And he had the perfect issue.

"Suppose someone linked this guy to a case of police brutality," he told Carlson during a meeting in the mayor's office. "If we can connect him to even a hint of police abuse that occurred while he was chief. We've got him."

Carlson grinned, but then wondered. "The guy is squeaky clean and the press has never found a hint of a problem with him," he told Hutchins. "We'd have to create something."

"Maybe not," Hutchins said.

Carlson never asked Hutchins what he meant by that comment, but always wondered. Especially two weeks later when the beating of a homeless man in Golden Gate Park occurred.

There it was, the issue that Hutchins had wanted. A homeless man had been beaten to death and witnesses claimed it had been done by three cops, including Callahan's brother, deputy chief Phil Callahan.

The newspapers were all over it, especially The Journal and The Bulletin, which were ordered to go after Callahan in anyway possible. Homelessness was out and police brutality was in.

Even though Callahan had not been chief for nearly a year and had been nowhere near the alleged site of the beating incident, the link of a police beating to this mayoral candidate was enough to cause problems.

And the fact that the victim was a homeless man, the very type of person that Callahan had vowed to rid the city of and find new homes for, made it doubly difficult for him.

As the days went on and the investigation into the homeless beating continued, both daily newspapers put most of their efforts on the stories, talking to homeless people living in the park who claimed to have seen regular police beatings, using off-the-record comments from officers about how the beating murder had occurred and ripping the police in editorials and columns every day.

Meanwhile, Callahan had difficulty defending his officers and his brother because all he could do was continue denying that the incident had occurred,

despite the mounting evidence. He had no proof that the beatings had not happened, he just insisted that they hadn't.

Soon the mood shifted completely away from how Carlson had ignored the homeless and how Callahan was going to help them. Instead, there was only intense scrutiny of Callahan for the actions of his brother and the other officers.

Jimmy Min was concerned. He had not only put his paper's time, money and support behind Callahan. But he had also gone out on a limb and risked losing every bit of political force he had mustered in the past few years.

Aside from having McLean slam Carlson and praise Callahan in his columns and having reporters dig up everything they could on Carlson, Min had also put his efforts in to campaigning for Callahan.

Although none of it was declared on Callahan's campaign disclosure statements, The Advocate had been printing up fliers, signs and brochures for Callahan's campaign, at cost, and distributing them. Min also had several workers assigned solely to phoning prospective voters to push for Callahan, often using Advocate phone lines and offices after hours.

"We need to get this guy in office so we can be in office," Jimmy had told one of his employees during a long, weekend phone campaign. "He is our ticket in."

But the ticket was sinking fast. Every day brought another link of Callahan's brother to the beating. He was eventually taken off active duty, while the homeless began holding daily protests outside Callahan's campaign headquarters on Van Ness Avenue -- one of the city's major thoroughfares.

The issue kept raging for the next month. As it spun out of control, Jimmy and Billy tried to do everything they could. Counter attacks in the press, issue papers spouting all Callahan had done for the homeless as chief, and even a lengthy mailer on his 10-point plan for bringing San Francisco back to success.

But none of it could block the beating issue.

At one point, in mid-June, Billy Dale was so upset by the whole thing, he disappeared on a long weekend to Reno. He often went there to stay with his Uncle Simon, who owned the Miracle Hotel and Casino. The two would play poker, drink and talk about politics. Although Simon didn't dabble in Billy's profession, he had met a lot of politicians through the casino and his mob connections.

When Billy got there on that Friday afternoon, he met Simon in his private penthouse suite and the two ordered up some drinks.

"Sorry to hear about your problems," Simon said as he poured some brandy. "That bastard has got your chief against a wall."

"Yeah, I know, but we have got to have a way to shoot back. There has got to be something in that guy's history that we can hit," Billy said. "But we've run after everything we can. Nothing can go up against this beating case."

"Well, what about his casino friends," Simon said, as he blew smoke from a Cuban cigar over in Billy's direction. "The guy has a reputation up here."

"Sure," Billy said as he took a bite of a sandwich. "We all know that he comes up here a lot. I hear he likes Tom Jones."

The two laughed.

“What we would really need is proof that he has associated with underworld people. Rumor won’t be enough.”

“Well, let me see what I can do,” Simon said, coughing as he puffed the last of his cigar. “You never know what you can find until you look.”

Billy smiled. After two days of drinking, gambling and enough buffet food to add at least 10 pounds, Billy went back. He wasn’t looking forward to returning to San Francisco with the whole police brutality mess waiting, but he knew he had to face it.

Two weeks after he returned, he got a call from Simon.

“I got something for you, but I can’t talk on the phone, you never know who might be listening,” Simon said as Billy grew a smile on his face. “Just wait for it.”

The next day, a UPS truck pulled up to Callahan’s campaign headquarters and the driver brought Billy a special delivery package. He took it and opened it.

Inside was a videotape and nothing else. Billy took it into his private office and shut the door. He also told his secretary that he did not want to be interrupted.

He popped the videotape in the machine, turned it on, and watched.

What he saw, he couldn’t believe.

There on the tape was a recording of three men playing poker in a suite at The El Presidente Hotel and Casino in Reno, just one block from The Miracle. The three men were very well known to Billy, and to almost everyone in California.

Two of the men were John Garligo, the west coast head of one of the country’s most powerful restaurant unions, and underworld boss Anthony Marsconi, who controlled mob casino operations from Reno to Las Vegas.

The third man in the video was none other than William Carlson.

Billy beamed. This could be it. Forget about the homeless, forget about police brutality, forget about all of that. They had the mayor..... the fucking mayor of San Francisco..... on tape with one of the country’s biggest mobsters.

Billy immediately called Simon, from a pay phone, to find out what had happened.

Billy and most of San Francisco had known that Carlson liked to frequent Reno and liked to stay at the El Presidente. Some said it was because it made him feel like he was the president by staying somewhere with a presidential name.

While his trips to Reno didn’t make him look good, no one could ever associate him with any questionable people. Simon, after talking to Billy, made a few phone calls to see if he could. After 20 years in Reno, a lot of people liked Simon and a lot more owed him favors. He had gotten a reputation as a good businessman who treated his employees well.

Even when workers had left him to go to bigger hotels and casinos, Simon never held grudges and always kept in touch. Those connections had finally paid off.

The day after Billy had left, Simon had gotten on the phone to the El Presidente and talked to its chief day manager, Charlie Coles, who had worked

for Simon about five years earlier. He asked him if Carlson had a reservation to visit anytime soon. Coles said he had just made a reservation for the following weekend.

Simon then asked if there were any major political events in the city that weekend. He was told there were not, which meant Carlson was just planning to socialize and might spend a lot of time meeting with people in his room.

He then asked Coles if Carlson had a favorite room he liked to frequent.

“Yeah, he loves the honeymoon suite,” Coles laughed. “I’m not sure why, but he always stays there, even without his wife. I think it makes him feel young when he brings hookers up there.”

Simon laughed and asked if that room was available for Carlson. Cole said it was and had been booked for him. That was enough for Simon, who hung up.

Later that day, Simon waited outside of the employee entrance to the El Presidente for another former employee, Dick Greers, who was the head of the El Presidente maintenance crew. Dick had worked for Simon for only about a year, but they had grown close when Simon paid for his alcohol rehabilitation when his drinking had caused him to lose his job.

Although Simon had fired Greers, he had helped him get the rehab he needed and, later, got him a better job at another casino. When Greers saw Simon, he couldn’t help but give him a big hug.

After they chatted, Simon took him out for lunch and asked him for a favor. He wanted Greers to plant a videotape camera inside Carlson’s room. His hope was to catch him with one of the hookers Carlson often had ordered up to the room.

“That’s asking a lot,” Greers said. “Not only could I get fired, but we could get sued. It’s too risky.”

Simon asked again. He pleaded and begged, he really wanted to do this for Billy.

Greers finally gave in. He returned the next day to work and carefully placed the camera inside the hotel room closet, where it could peer out through a small hole in the top. His plan was to run it each night for the maximum six-hour VHS tape limit and change it in the morning when Carlson left.

But it only took one night. Although no hookers ever made it up to Carlson’s room that weekend, something better had happened on Friday night. After a secret dinner with Garligo and Marsconi at Marsconi’s house in the Reno foothills, the three had come back to Carlson’s room, through a hotel backdoor, and played poker all night.

The next Monday, Greers gave the tape to Simon who sent it to Billy Dale.

Billy was ecstatic. He called the news directors of the top three news stations and told them to meet him in his office. He said he would give them each the tape if they vowed not to say where they got it. He said he wanted to deal directly with them instead of their reporters so that there would be no misunderstanding about who knew what.

That night, all three 6 p.m. newscasts led with the tape and the story of the mayor meeting with a major organized crime figure. Although no one was doing

anything illegal, no money changed hands and no laws were broken, that link was worse than anything Callahan had allegedly done.

And it worked like nothing ever had.

From that July day through election night, the polls steadily dropped for Carlson. Callahan, meanwhile, regained his stature when the police beating case died out for lack of evidence. Since the only witnesses for the investigators were homeless people and no direct link to Phil or Jack Callahan ever surfaced, the case was dropped without a charge against anyone.

And, when the Reno story broke, it took over the campaign all the way through to Election Day.

When Election Day came, Carlson was out, Callahan was in and Billy and Jimmy were sitting on a cloud.

As the Fairmont Hotel ballroom crowd partied toward midnight, Billy and Jimmy drank, danced and cheered themselves to victory.

Billy knew that his political power had hit the top and Jimmy knew that his newspaper would now be regarded among the most powerful in the city. He also knew that the new mayor could help him boost that power more by helping him to get city contracts for public notices, have a say in issues that affected his readers and, most importantly, help him wield his position as a city leader.

Just before midnight, as the party hit full stride, Senator Chin got up at the podium. He greeted the cheers of the crowd with just one sentence.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Chin said, his voice raspy and slightly slurred. “Your new mayor, Jack Callahan.”