Guide to the San José State University Oral History Project Collection
MSS-2006-04-01

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Abstract: This collection contains audio tapes and transcripts documenting the experiences of key administrators and faculty from San José State University. The oral histories described reflect the changes in campus governance, curriculum, and student life from 1952 to the present.

Scope and Contents
This Oral History Project documents the history of San José State University (SJSU) from 1952 to the present. The interviews cover a wide spectrum of subjects from student life, faculty and university governance, policymaking, capital campaigns, and changes in higher education in California. Collectively these interviews document the sweeping social, political and economic changes that shaped American society and which thereby transformed academic life and culture at SJSU. The post-war years offered great prosperity and new opportunities for college students in California. The impact of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war, forever changed academics and influenced the development of new programs and disciplines, including the formation of New College (1968-1980), an experimental interdisciplinary school, and new majors in African American Studies, Chicano Studies, Asian American Studies, and Women Studies. Changes in curriculum and the diversity of the student body and faculty led to a watershed that moved the institution forward from a small college to a major metropolitan university. The interviews and in particular, the account of Reverend Benton White, professor of religious studies, present some of the challenges the university faced in addressing civil rights on campus and in society. Many of the themes from these interviews shed light on student and faculty strikes during the Vietnam war, the Tommie Smith and John Carlos 1968 Olympics controversy, the development of an ombudsman position to address racial discrimination, and other social justice issues on campus. The tumult of the civil rights movement and anti-war demonstrations on campus mirrored other college and university experiences across the United States, yet laid the foundation for a more democratic and diverse institution.

This Collection consists of sixteen audio interviews, interview transcriptions, and project correspondence from San José State University Oral History Project, conducted in 2005 and 2006. The interviews were conducted by Dr. Margo McBane, Bonnie Montgomery and Suzanne Guerra. Each interviewee was asked to reflect on their early experiences working at SJSU, to describe key historical events, to discuss changes in policy, and to comment on the how these policies impacted the students, faculty, and administration.

Biographical / Historical
San José State University (SJSU) has the distinction of being the oldest public institution of higher education on the West Coast. The early history of SJSU began in 1857 in San Francisco with the formation of the Minns’ Evening Normal School. The Minns’ Evening Normal School provided the foundation for the formation of the first California State Normal School in 1862 and firmly established the college and university system in the state. In 1870 the campus moved from San Francisco to San José. San José State Normal School’s name has evolved along with the institution. In 1921 San José State Teachers College, later renamed San José State College in 1935, later renamed California State University, San José in 1972 when it achieved university status, and finally, San José State University in 1974. From its beginnings as a normal school to train teachers for the developing frontier, SJSU has matured into a metropolitan university offering more than 134 bachelor's and master's degrees with 110 concentrations. The California State University system is the direct descendant of the San José Normal School. The SJSU Special Collections & Archives received a generous donation from Hobert W. Burns, former Academic Vice President, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, to sponsor the San José State University (SJSU) Oral History Project. This donation provided the funding needed to interview key administrators, faculty and staff. These interviews document the history of the university from 1952 to the present, and provide a rich array of personal accounts of student and campus life, faculty and university governance and policymaking.

Arrangement
The San José State University Oral History Project Collection is arranged into three series: Series I. Recordings; Series II. Transcripts; and Series III. Project Records.

Preferred Citation
San José State University Oral History Project Collection, MSS-2006-04-01, San José State University Library Special Collections & Archives.
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Conditions Governing Access
Transcripts and recollections are available for research use. Due to their fragile nature access to the audio tapes is restricted.

Processing Information
Processed by Alexandra Lynch, Spring 2017.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
San José State University -- History
Education -- California -- San Jose (Calif.)
Oral histories
Blockhus, Wanda, 1931-
Douglas, John R.
Yaffe, Ruth
Lange, Lester H.
Male, Mary
Melendy, H. Brett (Howard Brett)
Milioto, Samuel
Moore, George
Noah, James
Noble, Lela
Norton, Theodore
Pinson, Jay
Sivertsen, Wiggsy
Walsh, James P., 1937-
White, J. Benton, 1931-
Whitlatch, Jo Bell
Guerra, Suzanne
McBane, Margo
Montgomery, Bonnie

Series I. Recordings
Scope and Contents
This series contains the audio tapes of the oral history interviews.

Arrangement
This series is arranged alphabetically by last name of interviewee.

Box 1, Folder 1  Blockhus, Wanda 2006
Box 1, Folder 2  Douglas, Jack 2005
Box 1, Folder 3  Lange, Lester 2006
Box 1, Folder 4  Male, Mary 2006
Box 1, Folder 5  Melendy, H. Brett 2006
Box 1, Folder 6  Milioto, Samuel 2006
Box 1, Folder 7  Moore, George 2006
Box 1, Folder 8  Noah, James 2006
Box 1, Folder 9  Noble, Lela 2006
Series I. Recordings

Box 1, Folder 10  Norton, Theodore 2006
Box 1, Folder 11  Pinson, Jay 2005
Box 1, Folder 12  Sivertsen, Wiggsy 2005
Box 1, Folder 13  Walsh, James P. 2005
Box 1, Folder 14  White, J. Benton White 2005
Box 1, Folder 15  Whitlatch, Jo Bell 2006
Box 1, Folder 16  Yaffe, Ruth 2006
Box 2, Folder 13  SJSU Library Forum Tape 1 2007

Series II. Transcripts

Arrangement
This series is arranged alphabetically by last name of interviewee.

Scope and Contents
This series contains the transcripts of the oral history interviews.

Box 1, Folder 17  Blockhus, Wanda 2006
Box 1, Folder 18  Douglas, Jack 2006
Box 1, Folder 19  Lange, Lester 2006
Box 1, Folder 20  Male, Mary 2006
Box 1, Folder 21  Melendy, H. Brett 2006
Box 1, Folder 22  Milioto, Samuel 2006
Box 1, Folder 23  Moore, George 2006
Box 1, Folder 24  Noah, James 2006
Box 1, Folder 25  Noble, Lela 2006
Box 1, Folder 26  Norton, Theodore 2006
Box 2, Folder 1  Pinson, Jay 2006
Box 2, Folder 2  Sivertsen, Wiggsy 2005
Box 2, Folder 3  Walsh, James P. 2005
Box 2, Folder 4  White, J. Benton 2006
Box 2, Folder 5  Whitlatch, Jo Bell 2006
Box 2, Folder 6  Yaffe, Ruth 2006

Series III. Project Records

Arrangement
This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Scope and Contents
This series contains records such as correspondence, resumes, and agreements that are related to the oral history project.

Box 2, Folder 7  Anonymous Survey Results
Box 2, Folder 8  Interviewee Correspondence 2006
Box 2, Folder 9  Interview Notes
Box 2, Folder 10  Interviewee Resumes
Box 2, Folder 11  Photographs 1992-2005
Box 2, Folder 12  Staff Correspondence 2005-2006