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Stanford University. Libraries. Department of Special Collections and University Archives
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Overview

Call Number: SCM0237
Creator: Snyder, Rixford K., (Rixford Kinney), 1908-
Title: Rixford Kinney Snyder, "Memories of a Santa Clara Valley Boy Who Never Left, 1908-1991" typescript
Dates: 1991
Physical Description: 0.25 Linear feet (2 volumes)
Summary: Original and revised version of Rixford's autobiography.
Language(s): The materials are in English.
Repository: Department of Special Collections and University Archives
Green Library
557 Escondido Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-6064
Email: specialcollections@stanford.edu
Phone: (650) 725-1022
URL: http://library.stanford.edu/spc/university-archives

Information about Access
This collection is open for research.

Cite As
Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif.

Biographical/Historical Sketch
Rixford Kinney Snyder, Professor of History, Dean of Admissions, and first Director of the Alumni Association’s Travel/Study Program.

Snyder was born and raised in the Willow Glen area of San Jose and attended local schools. He became the first in his family to attend college when he enrolled at Stanford University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1930, master's in 1934 and Ph.D. in 1940. From 1935 to 1937 he was a Royall Victor fellow in history. He was an instructor from 1937 until 1943, specializing in the history of the British Empire. In 1943 he joined the Navy to become an instructor in Naval pre-flight schools.

After the war, he returned to Stanford as an Associate Professor of History. Readings in Western Civilization, co-authored with fellow history Professor George H. Knoles, "was required reading at the time," said longtime friend and Alumni Association colleague Darien Dufour Walker, A.B. ’60. “It had everything in it from Plato to more modern writings.”

In 1950, Snyder was appointed Director of Admissions, by President J.E. Wallace Sterling, beginning a nineteen-year tenure as director and eventually dean, when the university elevated the post. Personal accounts of Snyder’s legacy in admissions highlight expanding the geographic recruiting reach of the office and offering opportunities to first generation college students. “Following Sterling’s charge, Snyder made the entire nation Stanford’s recruiting ground. Under his leadership, we visited secondary schools in regions relatively untapped, such as much of the Midwest and Southwest,” wrote Brooks.

Bob Freelen, AB ’57, MBA ’59, recalls his first days as a freshman at Stanford when Snyder personally made sure he felt comfortable as a first generation college student far away from his home in Vermont. Cycling through campus in his trademark hat. Snyder maintained a personal connection with many of the over 30,000 undergraduates he brought to Stanford. John Arrillaga A.B. ’60, remembers Snyder looking him in the eye, shaking his hand and confirming his admission, a decision that changed Arrillaga’s future, who said “Rixford’s ability to determine a person’s character and ability to succeed is something that continues to benefit Stanford to this day.” Longtime colleague and personal friend Douglas R. Walker AB ’57, AM ’63, whom Snyder admitted, recalls that “Rix didn’t have a mean bone in his body except when dealing with Cal.” A passionate Stanford athletics fan, Snyder was instrumental in working with the athletic department and recruiting the best scholar-athletes to Stanford, including admitting the players on two Stanford Rose Bowl teams.

In 1969, Snyder started what is now the Travel/Study program. “He felt strongly that there should be a way for alumni to connect back to the university,” said Kay Williams, who worked with Snyder in the Travel/Study office in the 1980s. “He was a giant in his field and a giant in alumni relations. He knew alumni were as integral to the university as the faculty and students.” He got the idea to arrange Danube boat trips for Stanford graduates while he and his wife, Elliott, were visiting
the family of one of his former students in Austria.
Snyder formally retired in 1974 but kept a workspace in the Travel/Study office where he compiled his memoirs. He continued to go on alumni trips well into his 70s. A major supporter of Stanford sports, Snyder has a scholarship in his name that is run by the Athletics Department. He served as president of the local Rotary Club, and in his later years became increasingly involved in Palo Alto’s senior community.
“All of his life, he loved learning,” Walker said. “He loved anything new. It was an adventure for him. He had a childlike enthusiasm for what was going on. New food, new areas, new people to know—it was all a real joy for him. To the day he died, he enjoyed new things.”
Elliott Snyder, to whom he was married for 64 years, died four years before her husband at 94. The couple did not have children, and are survived by two nieces.

Description of the Collection
Original and revised version of Rixford’s autobiography.

Access Terms
Snyder, Rixford K., (Rixford Kinney), 1908-