Guide to the Robert Gentry Papers MS.R.167

**Language of Material:** English

**Contributing Institution:** Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries

**Title:** Robert Gentry papers

**Identifier/Call Number:** MS.R.167

**Physical Description:** 0.8 Linear Feet (2 boxes) and 2.4 unprocessed linear feet

**Date (inclusive):** 1964-2006

**Date (bulk):** 1983-1999

**Language of Material:** Collection materials are in English.

**Abstract:** This collection comprises the political and professional papers of Robert F. Gentry, the first openly gay elected official in southern California and first openly gay mayor in the state of California. Gentry served as mayor and a city councilmember in the city of Laguna Beach, California, serving from 1982 to 1994, and also served as Associate Dean of Students at the University of California, Irvine. Materials include correspondence and hate mail, awards, and clippings by and about Gentry as well as the AIDS-related death of his longtime partner Gary Burdick.

**Access**

Processed components of the collection are open for research. Unprocessed additions may contain restricted materials. Please contact the Department of Special Collections and Archives in advance to request access.

**Publication Rights**

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**Preferred Citation**


For the benefit of current and future researchers, please cite any additional information about sources consulted in this collection, including permanent URLs, item or folder descriptions, and box/folder locations.

**Acquisition Information**


**Processing History**

Processed by Audra Eagle Yun, Alix Norton, and student assistants; 2013.

**Historical Background**

Robert F. Gentry was born in 1938 in Massachusetts. In the 1970s he moved to California, and in 1982 he was elected the mayor of Laguna Beach, becoming the first openly gay elected official in southern California and first openly gay mayor in the state of California. Gentry served as mayor and a city councilmember in Laguna Beach, serving the local community from 1982 to 1994. He was also Associate Dean of Students at the University of California, Irvine. During his time as mayor, he spearheaded efforts to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, and to allow same-sex couples the rights of married heterosexual couples. Gentry led the city’s effort to pass a domestic partnership ordinance granting gay and lesbian couples some of the same rights as heterosexual married couples and a law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. Gentry and his spouse Dennis Amick Gentry benefited from these efforts as they were the first registered domestic partners in Laguna Beach in 1992; subsequently, they legally married in California in 2008. Gentry was also involved in many environmental projects around the Laguna Beach area.

**Collection Scope and Content Summary**

This collection comprises the political and professional papers of Robert F. Gentry, the first openly gay elected official in southern California. Gentry served as mayor and a city councilmember in the city of Laguna Beach, California, serving from 1982 to 1994, and also served as Associate Dean of Students at the University of California, Irvine. Materials include correspondence and hate mail, awards, and clippings by and about Gentry as well as the AIDS-related death of his longtime partner Gary Burdick.

While a considerable amount of Gentry's materials were destroyed in the Laguna Beach fire of 1993, this collection provides strong evidence of his role as an advocate for gay rights, environmental protection, and neighborhood preservation.

**Arrangement**

This collection is arranged in 3 series:

- Series 1. Professional papers, 1983-1989
Series 3. Clippings and programs, 1964-2004
This collection also contains one unprocessed addition:
Accession 2019.001. LGBTQ materials unprocessed addition, 1970-2006. 2.4 linear feet.

Related Collections
Related materials can be found in the following collections: AS-151, Christine Browning Files on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues at the University of California, Irvine

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Environmentalists -- California -- Orange County
Gay rights -- California -- Orange County -- History -- Sources
Laguna Beach (Calif.) -- Politics and government -- 20th century
Domestic partner benefits -- California -- Laguna Beach
University of California, Irvine. Office of the Dean of Students

Professional papers 1983-1999
box 1, folder 1  Correspondence 1983-1999
box 1, folder 3  Laguna Beach City Council agenda bills, notes, and election literature 1984-1994
box 1, folder 5  Lecture notes, speech to UC Regents on domestic partner health benefits undated
box 1, folder 4  Student essay on Gentry 1997
Awards 1990-1994
box 1, folder 2

1990-1994
Clippings and programs 1964-2004
box 1, folder 6
box 1, folder 7-11
box 2, folder 1-6
box 2, folder 7-8

Clippings on Gary Burdick 1989
Physical Description: 2.4 Linear Feet(1 letter document box; 1 half letter document box; 2 OS flat boxes)
Access
This addition to the collection has not been processed but is open for research. Please contact the Department of Special Collections and Archives in advance to request access.
Series Scope and Contents Summary
This addition to the collection is comprised of materials from Gentry's time as UCI Associate Dean of Students, materials from LGBTQ conferences, and awards and plaques.

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