Guide to the Garrett Hardin oral history OH 46


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2015 August 13
Title: Garrett Hardin oral history
Identifier/Call Number: OH 46
Contributing Institution: UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Special Research Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 3 linear feet (3 document boxes, 18 audiocassettes)
Creator: Hardin, Garrett James, 1915-2003
Creator: Russell, David (David E.)
Date: 1983
Abstract: The collection contains background material, audiotapes, and transcripts of interviews conducted by David E. Russell, with Garrett Hardin, in 1983.
Physical Location: Special Research Collections, UC Santa Barbara Library
Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research.
Use Restrictions
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], Garrett Hardin oral history, OH 46. Department of Special Research Collections, UC Santa Barbara Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.
Acquisition Information
Processing Information
Preliminary arrangement and description by Special Collections staff; latest version, D. Tambo, Aug. 10, 2015.
Biographical Note
Garrett Hardin was a professor of Human Ecology at the University of California Santa Barbara. He was a writer and lecturer concerned with the problems of overpopulation, and was best known for his essay The Tragedy of the Commons (Science, 1968).
Born in Dallas, Texas, in 1915, Hardin contracted polio at the age of four, which left him with a crippled right leg. Nonetheless, he excelled in swimming, as well as theater and academics. He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Chicago in 1936, and a Ph.D. in Biology from Stanford University in 1941. He worked at Stanford until 1946, when he became an assistant professor at UCSB. He remained at UCSB until he retired with the title of professor emeritus in 1978.
Garrett Hardin's many awards include the UCSB Faculty Research Lectureship (1968), and numerous honorary degrees. He was a visiting professor at several universities across the country, including the University of California Berkeley, Cornell University, and the University of Notre Dame.
Garrett Hardin died at age 88 in Santa Barbara, California, in 2003.
The Garrett Hardin Society maintains a webpage with extensive information about Hardin, his life, career, and a bibliography of his writings. Go to: http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/
Scope and Content
The collection contains background material, audiotapes, and transcripts of interviews conducted by David E. Russell, with Garrett Hardin, in 1983. The interviews cover Garrett Hardin's life, from early childhood through his academic career, concluding at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**Related Material**
Garrett Hardin Papers (UArch FacPap 14), and University Archives: Bio Files. University of California, Santa Barbara, Arts and Lectures Records.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
- Transcripts
- Audiocassettes
- Interviews
- Overpopulation
- Environmental policy
- Birth control
- College teachers -- California -- Santa Barbara
- Authors, American
- Biology
- Natural resources
- Oral history
- Environmental protection
- Human ecology

**Box 1**

**Background/Research Materials**

**Scope and Content**
Includes articles about Hardin and talk by him to the Friends of the UCSB Library entitled "The Relation of Scholarship to Action as Exemplified in the Abortion Problem," Feb. 11, 1970

**Transcripts**

- **Box 1-2** Early drafts, by tape number
- **Box 2** Later draft, by topic, roughly chronological
- **Box 3** Finished version

**Audiocassettes**

Other Descriptive Information
These audiocassettes have been digitized.

**item A18005/CS**

**Tape 1 1983 April 6**

**Scope and Content**
"The Early Years" – discussion of grandparents, parents, contracting polio at age 4, early school experiences in Kansas City, move to Memphis, playing marbles and tops, excelling academically, differences of living in the South vs the North, move to Chicago, going to the Field Museum and interest in natural history, playing the violin, summers on a farm, death of Will Rogers, radio programs like Amos and Andy.
item A18006/CS  
**Tape 2 1983 April 13**

**Scope and Content**

"Education" – discussion of high school years in South Chicago, trip to meet Edison and visit the Edison laboratory, most influential teachers, going to the University of Chicago and acting school at the same time for a while, influence of professors and courses at the University of Chicago, living at home, relatively little impact of Depression on the family, influence of Mortimer J. Adler and Robert Maynard Hutchins, use of the Socratic Method, after graduating getting a research assistant position with Dr. Willis Johnson at Stanford University, buying a car and driving out west, working on population limits of paramecium, influence of George Beadle and C. B. van Niel.

item A18007/CS  
**Tape 3 1983 April 20**

**Scope and Content**

"The War Years and First Teaching Position" – discussion of obtaining his Ph.D., signing up for draft mid-1941 although physical impairment would preclude being drafted, meeting his wife who was an undergraduate at Stanford and getting married, talk of her family, working two research jobs at Stanford after Pearl Harbor, backtracking to experiences with research on paramecium and population for Ph.D. work, gas and other rationing during WWII, biological research asking question of what stops population growth in any living organism, understanding view of minorities feeling like second-class citizens since he in a way was treated as a second-class citizen as a biologist in a lab full of chemists, interactions with David Bonner and Wallace Stegner, deciding on teaching rather than research career, taking a teaching job at the Santa Barbara College of the University of California (now UCSB) which was not considered a very prestigious institution at the time although it had some good biologists (mentions Elmer Noble), discussion of the population problem that you cannot solve by increasing supply but only by decreasing demand (hence limiting population levels), arriving in Santa Barbara in 1946 at a time of post-war housing shortages.

item A18008/CS  
**Tape 4 1983 May 4**

**Scope and Content**

"Early Interest in Population Problems" – discussion of Malthusian theory, faculty at Santa Barbara College including Hazel Severy, WWII and Korean veterans at the school, fight over becoming a small liberal arts college (GH's preference) vs a larger research university, difficulties of doing research with inadequate resources, writing a well received elementary biology textbook, becoming associate professor, candid opinions of faculty including Helen Sweet, Paul Jones, Willlum (William) Ashworth, Charlie Jacobs, Russell Buchanan, Douwe Stuurman,Fred Addicott, Ernie Bickerdike, Mary Erickson, Willard McRary, Harrington Wells, involvement with the Santa Barbara Symphony, family life which grew to four children, building a larger house.

item A18009/CS  
**Tape 5 1983 May 18**

**Scope and Contents**

"From the Lab to the Field of Ecology" – discussion of beginning of interest in population, birth control and abortion, partly as result of 1959 Planned Parenthood report on abortion, resistance in early 1960s to abortion, Oct. 1963 campus-wide lecture on legalization of abortion, arguing from position of women's rights, major response to lecture - locally, nationally and abroad, society's reaction to abortion, pro-lifers and the beginning of life, late-term abortions and who decides, other lectures and books on birth control /abortion (Birth Control and Mandatory Motherhood), overwhelming support from biologists, Catholic Church and views on contraception, being an activist for abortion, visit to India and discussion of birth control and population levels there, Moral Majority and their fear of change.
Audiocassettes

Scope and Content
Discussion of time teaching at UCSB, in part as a way to respond to ever-growing class sizes, at first live and then later years recorded, encouraging other faculty to participate, some later faculty dissatisfaction with the method, success with teaching small class by the Socratic method, discussion of work of Joseph Townsend, problems of supporting an aging population, levelling off or reducing population, population growth in the face of reduction of enemies (like disease), unintended consequences of research that results in the reduction of suffering, efforts of Chinese to control population through one child per family, mistaken belief that technology can solve all our problems.

Scope and Content
Discussion of origins of and reception to his Tragedy of the Commons, ongoing issues of population, idea of Greek and other tragedy, stabilization of population but probably in society with less freedom and tolerance, China and one child policy, lack of recognition in U.S. of population problems and no real population control, problems of overpopulation in India, Buckminster Fuller and his thoughts on the future, finite resources and recycling, low opinion of the geodesic dome.

Scope and Contents
GH's viewpoint of religion and morality, and difficulty understanding what either means, early exposure to Christian Science, Mortimer Adler and his courses at the University of Chicago including early Greek philosophers, resistance to change and "Hardin's Rule" that it takes five years for someone to change their mind on something important, similarity of politics and religion, identifying more with conservatives, problem of both conservatism and liberalism being excessively built on the idea of individualism, GH's method of getting interested in a topic and exploring it in depth, then moving on to the next (including psychiatry and ethics), influence of the writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, discussion of psychology and Freud, eclectic approach to reading literature, discussion of GH's book Exploring New Ethics for Survival: The Voyage of the Spaceship Beagle (fiction and non-fiction parts), concept of 'mutual coercion', public morality and relationship to population density, tenuous relationship between social and biological evolution, genetic engineering and its tendency to encourage a science fiction sort of mentality.
item A18017/CS

**Tape 10 1983 July 7**

**Scope and Contents**

Further discussion of Exploring New Ethics for Survival..., concept of Einstein's closed system, GH as apologist for population control and birth control, cost of rewarding people not to have children vs cost of raising unwanted children, Paul Ehrlich and the influence of his book The Population Bomb, Ehrlich's view that we cannot survive on an island of affluence in an ocean of misery, which GH disagrees with, pollution in poor and rich countries and its effects on the atmosphere (and climate change), lecture tour with Ed Duckworth, various organizations concerned with population limits (including Planned Parenthood), Environmental Fund, women's liberation movement and impact on limiting fertility, making of and impact of film based on Tragedy of the Commons, Watergate as Greek tragedy.

item A18018/CS-A18019/CS

**Tape 11 [original and copy] 1983 July 13**

**Scope and Content**

Involvement with Environmental Fund (group of like-minded people, all with interest in population issues), argument that birth control (as with Planned Parenthood) is not same as population control, work of Bill Paddock, discussion of factors that might lead to a population crash, other Environmental Fund members such as Justin Blackwelder, Emerson Foot, Bud Roper, year in DC heading up Enviromental Fund, other organizations such as Negative Population Growth and FAIR also dealing with population issues.

item A18020/CS

**Tape 12 1983 July 20**

**Scope and Content**

Justin Blackwelder and the publication The Other Side (TOS), Declaration on Population and Food as reaction to Bread for the World, U.S. Aid and its setting up of phony organizations, Mark Hatfield and Christian tradition of being one's brother's keeper, foreign aid and concept of self-sufficiency, need for better population data figures, great development of agricultural expertise and productivity in the twentieth century, differences in growing certain crops in different parts of the world, discussion of limited resources and how to dispose of them, concept of 'lifeboat ethics' vs 'triage', opposition to those who don't see need to curb population growth, teaching course in human ecology but not developing the concept as well as he would have liked.

item A18021/CS

**Tape 13 1983 August 4**

**Scope and Contents**

Other important papers by Hardin, the first being "The Last Canute," written in 1946, about the future of libraries and information; Hardin's interaction with Donald Davidson (UCSB Librarian); also an article entitled "The Meaninglessness of Protoplasm," written in the latter 1940s, both articles putting him in touch with an academic community larger than just biologists, and the latter being used by Katherine Esau (UCSB Biology) in her classes; not reading much in the way of novels, except for Dorothy Sayers; return to discussion of Environmental Fund and Hardin's participation, probably less in the future; opposition to food aid to foreign countries, since it just encourages unsustainable population growth; mention of William Ophuls and Herman Daly; disagrees that "all men are created equal," especially in biological terms; role of family in society, implications of the aging of society; attitude of society toward life and death, and its economic costs; discussion of Hastings Institute and Barry Commoner; books and ideas re man and environment that Hardin feels harmful, including Bambi and Jonathan Livingston Seagull, and parts of the Bible; ambivalence toward ways universities have developed, in terms of costs and specialization.
Scope and Content
Admiration for scientists such as George Beadle, C. B. van Niel; discussion of English vs American education system; thoughts about the future and institution of marriage, effect of China and one child policy on population, role of political and economic systems on society, nuclear problem as the most important in determining the future; interest in writing a book on population that clearly shows the basic math behind it; relationships and disagreements between ecologists and economists; the role of age in decision making; role of technology, especially computers, in shaping society; final comments and Hardin's epitaph, if he could write it, would be "He had fun."