
Guide to the Robert Gentry Papers MS.R.167

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Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries

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

Title: Robert Gentry papers

Creator: Gentry, Robert F.

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

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.

Language of Material: Collection materials are in English.

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.

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Preferred Citation

Robert Gentry papers. MS-R167. Special Collections and Archives, The UC Irvine Libraries, Irvine, California. Date accessed. 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

Gift of Bob Gentry, 2013 and 2019.

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 2. Awards, 1990-1994

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

Event programs 1990-1995

box 1, folder 7-11,

Clippings 1964-1974, 1980-2004

box 2, folder 1-6

box 2, folder 7-8

Clippings on Gary Burdick 1989

Unprocessed addition 2019 Accession 2019.001 **1970-2006**

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.

box accn2019-001
001

Box 1 1970-2006

Series Scope and Content Summary

Materials from Gentry's time as UCI Associate Dean of Students; awards; materials from a community event honoring Gentry.

box accn2019-001
002

Box 2 1970-2006

Series Scope and Content Summary

Materials from LGBTQ conferences; awards.

Box 3 1970-2006

box accn2019-001
003

Box 3 1970-2006

Series Scope and Content Summary

Plaques and awards.

box accn2019-001
004

Box 4 1970-2006

Series Scope and Content Summary

Plaques.