Oral History Transcript
Del Stelck Early CSUN History Interviews Collection
Interviewee Delmar T. Oviatt = DO
Interviewer Del Stelck = DS, Unidentified Speaker(s) = USP
Interview conducted on October 7, 1971 at California State University, Northridge
Transcribed by: Cameron Takahashi
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Biographical Note

Delmar T. Oviatt was born in Canada in 1931. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Alberta in 1939, a master's degree in 1942 from Stanford University, and a doctorate degree in 1949 from Stanford University. Before entering higher education, Oviatt was a teacher and administrator at the junior high and high school levels in Canada. He also taught at Washington State College and the University of Utah before moving to Los Angeles. Oviatt was named dean of the proposed San Fernando Valley campus of Los Angeles State College of Applied Arts and Sciences in 1955 by Los Angeles State College President Howard McDonald. He became Dean of Instruction of the newly-independent San Fernando Valley. State College in 1958, and was named Vice President for Academic Affairs in 1962. After President Ralph Prator's resignation in 1968, Oviatt was briefly appointed acting interim president in January 1969, during a time of intense campus unrest. Delmar T. Oviatt passed away from a heart attack in his home on December 24, 1971 at the age of 60.

Interview Transcription

Reel 1

DS: My name is Del Stelck, professor of History, here at Valley State. Today is October 7th, 1971, and we are in Sierra Hall for class 497, History 497, proseminar. This semester, students are engaged in an oral history project concerning the establishment and early days of San Fernando Valley State College. Our guest today is Dr. Del Oviatt, a dear friend and colleague of many years who, more than any other single person is responsible for San Fernando Valley State College. Dr. Oviatt, may I begin by asking you some—to suggest to the class, the names of the people here in the community they ought to be sure to talk to?

DO: Locally, some of the citizen groups that were interested besides Julian Beck, there is a man still living in Northridge, Nathan O. Freedman. Mr. Freedman is a long time member of the community, longtime member of the board, the advisory board. He's been very precarious health, now, not, my guess that he would grant an interview. Want to talk to the real estate man that bought the property. All right? His—I would go to Ben Simak.

Ben Simak's office was involved—and I think Ben—I'm sure Ben Simak is still in the community, I see his signs still around. See the—Mr. Simak, as I recall, represented the seller. I can't tell you who the man who sold property was, Mr. Simak may remember. There were two

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brothers who owned this property, one of them was the librarian at Johns Hopkins University, whether that had an influence on making this an academic campus or not, I don't know.

USP: Whose construction company bought that?

DO: I can't tell you. For that, the person to contact on all of that is, is Mr. Warner Masters. Warner Masters is now the administrative Vice President. Mr. Masters will have all of that kind of information. One of the interesting, and this is completely disjointed, one of the—the first building, the first part of the building here was the library. I don't know why we didn't build a stadium, like most colleges do, but we got mixed up and built a library first. That was built by the State Department of Architecture. They did their own building. No—I'm sorry, it was planned by the state Department of Architecture, I don't know the construction company that built it. Just as that building was finished, we were visited by a man named Neutra. Neutra, since dead, was one of the famous architects, sort of the Frank Lloyd Wright. Neutra came here, and asked support of the college, to be the master architect for the entire campus. He was an old man at the time, probably in his seventies. He was in—Neutra and Alexander. And he proposed to build a modernistic campus, here. And he would master plan it, whether he got the contract for our—for doing all the buildings or not. And we were rather intrigued with the possibility of having Neutra design a whole campus. Eventually, he ended up designing the art building, the art building was designed by Mr. Neutra, after it had been toned down a good deal by the Department of Architecture. They had a much more modernistic type of building than the art building now is. But the—despite the fact that the college supported Mr. Neutra and his desire to master plan the whole campus, the Department of Architecture and the Sacramento powers turn down this for two reasons. One, because the Department of Architecture felt that this would be a step toward breaking down their control over state buildings, and secondly, because of the political implications. They felt that they could not give that large a contract to any one firm. Politically, we have found that—I don't think there have been two buildings built with the same builder or the same architect—the government passes their contracts around so they can have friends in many camps. But Warner Masters can, can give you a great deal of information. Now, if you like, I can give you some—switching from this business of who else you might talk to. I can give you some background on the campus, I'm a little bit, perhaps to start out with a little bit of touching on the, sort of the history of state colleges. How much time—

DS: We have until the event, about ten to eleven.

DO: You want—have you anything else planned?

DS: No, this is—we have reserved.

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DO: The state colleges originated at teacher's colleges. As a matter of fact, San Jose's state teacher's college, or San Jose State College, was originally a normal school, which was for training of teachers. It was located somewhere in the San Francisco area, and was later moved to San Jose. It claims to be the oldest teaching institution in California, incidentally, celebrated it's hundredth anniversary, oh, maybe twenty years ago, I guess, now. But there grew up a pattern of state colleges, state teacher's colleges. And there was, for some reason, I can't tell you why, re were none located in the Los Angeles area prior to World War II. There was San Jose, San Francisco, and Chico, and Humboldt, and San Diego, quite a string in them, all up and down, but not one in the Los Angeles area. And yet, Los Angeles, at that time, was by far the largest population center of the state.

USP: Could it be, given the fact that the Northern part of the state controlled the state legislation?

DO: Could've been. My guess is there were some political ramifications to it, what they were, I don't know. I was not here at the time, of course. But at any rate, right after World War II there came this pressure to establish state colleges in the Los Angeles area. Now, at that time, there was another movement grew up. The superintendent of schools of the City of Los Angeles was a man who was named Alexander Stoddard. Dr. Stoddard had been superintendent of schools at Philadelphia, and became superintendent of schools in Los Angeles. There were several city junior colleges, the most prestigious of which was LA City College on Vermont Avenue. And Dr. Stoddard, along with his board, decided that they would try and make that college into a four-year college owned by the City. A municipal four-year college. Now, these are rather rare. New York City has local four-year colleges. I think the University of Toledo was a four-year college of that kind. But, while junior colleges are commonly under a local school board, the idea of a four-year college was a rather a rare thing, but Dr. Stoddard felt that this would be a step in the right direction. So, he began the necessary political movement to get the permission for the city schools to operate a university. And this ran head-on into the movement in Sacramento to establish state colleges. And Dr. Simpson was responsible, as near as I can tell, for killing the idea of city colleges in Los Angeles. Instead, he proposed a joint effort. He proposed that the state would establish a two-year college that would teach only upper-division work. That the city junior colleges would teach freshman and sophomore, and then the state would have colleges that would pick up and be junior and senior. So, the first two years would be city, and the second two years would be state. And with this in mind, he persuaded the legislature to establish Los Angeles State College. And he persuaded the Board of Education to allow him to establish that state college on the Vermont campus. So, Los Angeles State College began as a two-year upper division school, located on Los Angeles City College campus.

USP: What year was this?

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DO: That was in 1948. It didn't work. It was a fine experiment, but it just had too many things going against it. One was the fact, of course, that the City College site was simply not big enough. The site of Vermont Avenue was the original site of UCLA. And UCLA was then called the Southern Branch of the University of California, moved out to Westwood in 1930, because the campus was too small, they had nearly 5,000 students. And so, they moved to Westwood in 1930. Now, eighteen years later, the City College was there, and it had, I think, about fifteen thousand students, and the State College came along and plunked right on top of it, and it had X-thousands of students. So, we had, we had probably well over twenty thousand students that a space that eighteen years before had been too small for five thousand. So, it was simply an impossible situation. The second thing that doomed it to failure was the fact that there was an intense rivalry between the junior college and the state college. The City College was the most prestigious institution amongst the junior colleges. They had gathered the staff and administration from all over the city, and they were recognized as the leaders. They had hoped to become a four-year college, and their hopes had been dashed. Now, superintendent began—Simpson begins to send onto that campus a bunch of people whom they regarded as interlopers. There were large numbers of young faculty, and quite frankly, they simply regarded us as people who had no business being there. We ought to be out going through the hard knocks, rather than coming in and saying we are the upper division college over the senior group. Furthermore, they tried, for example, to use the same library. Well, the people at City College thought it was their library, and indeed it was. They tried to use the same lunchroom, and the City College people felt we were intruding into their sacred eating grounds. They tried to use the same gymnasium, and so here we had two football teams, and only one football field. We had two basketball teams, and only one gymnasium. Do you see? It was just—it was just doomed to fail. Well, after a very short time, matter, only a few months, it became apparent that the conflicts were so bad that Superintendent Simpson, working with Mr. Stoddard, appointed one man to be president of both colleges. Now, the man who had been original president appointed for Los Angeles State College, was a man named Peterson, Victor Peterson of San Jose. He had been president of the college for only, I think, six months, and he had been—gotten himself deeply embroiled into this conflict. So, when they decided to try to put two presidents, I'm sorry, one president over two colleges, Victor Peterson obviously could not be the man. So, Superintendent Simpson started Long Beach State College, and moved Mr. Peterson down to Long Beach, where he remained as president for nearly ten years. This cleared the deck, and they hired Howard S. MacDonald. MacDonald, at that time, was president of Brigham Young University. He had been superintendent–-assistant superintendent of schools in San Francisco for about twenty years, and he came as president of both colleges. They also decided to have a vice president who would have power over both colleges, and for that, they took a man from the City College, whose name was Millum, Mr., Dr. Chester

Millum. Chet Millum is still alive, living up in Northern California on a little ranch, somewhere out in Grass

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Valley. I think he was alive, last time I heard. They appointed a dean of students over both colleges. That was this man, Dr. Renshaw that I refer to. So, then, we had two colleges, two faculties, two newspapers, everything separate except they were joined at the head. And Dr. MacDonald used to refer to them as the Siamese twins. Joined at the head and kicking the hell out of each other all the way down. But Dr. MacDonald and Millum and Renshaw presided in their dual capacity for a number of years. The faculty referred to them as the Holy Trinity, the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost, and they did their best. But, it was obvious that it was not going to work. There was still too much conflict, there wasn't enough space. The problems that were obvious in the beginning could not be cured by administrative band-aid, which was really what they were doing, do you see? So, then, they set out to split off Los Angeles State College. And at that point, Los Angeles State College became a political football. The state had a considerable surplus of money. They had piled up a good deal of money during the war years when the economy was booming and the buildings, state buildings, and so on, had been virtually shut down. So, we had, we had, I guess, billions of dollars of surplus money in the state budget in California, following World War II, and they were beginning to spend it. They were spending it for freeways, they were spending it for the universities, they were spending it for state colleges, they'd established Sacramento State college in the meantime, they'd established Long Beach State college, both of those communities were getting beautiful new campuses, and here was Los Angeles, with its state college, still stuck in rented facilities. So, everybody now wanted Los Angeles State College. And we started on a merry-go-round, which lasted for about three years. It was in, I think about 1951, that they decided to split the campuses about two years of this experimentation. And it wasn't until 1954 that they were able to locate other campuses. And it became ludicrous, the hunting that went on for a site. I didn't get in on much of it. At that time, I was Dean of the school of education at Los Angeles State College. And I would get in occasionally on this. For example, I went with President MacDonald, one day, when we went and tramped up and down to a place called Chavez Ravine. And it was a desolate piece of land near the center of Los Angeles, and decided it was a beautiful spot for a campus, that it made a beautiful spot for a campus, and you know what happened there. Something to do with the Dodgers decided to leave Brooklyn, and the mayor of Los Angeles decided they should come here. And the mayor of Los Angeles threw his weight against the use of Chavez Ravine for a college, and instead he built a Dodger's stadium, of course _____(??). We examined another site, down near that area, it was about four or five acres. It was owned by, I think by about three medical doctors. They proposed that they would build a high-rise university on five acres of land. And they would build it. They would build it and rent it to the state of California for fifty years, and at the end of that time, it will belong to the state. They would have gotten all their money out of it. It was a goofy kind of thing, you see, where the state, or the public money was being used to build Dodger Stadium and being given

to a private institution, on the other hand, a group of private entrepreneurs would build a public institution and

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give it back to the state, you see? We went down and looked at Ohrbach's store. We were going to buy Ohrbach's store downtown, downtown Los Angeles, and make that into a state college. We went out and looked at the big hotel that stands on the edge of Arroya Seco. Just go—big hotel ready to tumble down to the—what's on the—I don't know the name of it, it's on the—Pasadena side. But they were going to buy that. They had a hospital in mind. They nearly got Rose Hill Cemetery. It wasn't a cemetery then. They nearly got a place called Grand Central Airport, which was an airport down in Glendale. The story was, and I can't verify this, that they almost got the land that is now Forest Hills along the river down there, not the original Forest Hills, but in Hollywood. The story is that that land was to be made, was to be purchased, that the Forest Lawn people got permission to use it for a cemetery, one afternoon through whatever machinery had to make that approval, and at that that night, they buried a body there. Because according to the law, once a body is buried, it then becomes sanctified ground and cannot be _____(??). So, before the opposition could get organized the next day, they presumably buried the body at midnight in the hills to prevent the state college. I can't verify that story. All these others have at least a ring of truth to them. They looked at Brand Park, over in Glendale. The city of Burbank came up with a site, which they were going to give to the state. And it looked as though we finally had found a home. Then suddenly someone recalled that the Los Angeles State College could not be in Burbank, I mean, this would be just too much that Los Angeles State College would have a Burbank address, so that went out the window. Well, about this time, it became obvious that the fact was that one state college could not be placed in such a way as to satisfy the demands and the aspirations and the hopes of the _____(??) that was after it. And so, then, they came up with the, and I think it was Howard Macdonald, who came up with a concept, alright, we will build two campuses. Los Angeles State College will be a dual campus college. And, in that way, we can locate and satisfy more people. At this point, the San Fernando Valley got interested. And the group of people here, and Julian Beck can tell you much more about this than I can, because I was, at that point, not remotely interested in the San Fernando Valley. Julian Beck, in the legislature, headed the drive, at that point, to get one of those campuses located in the San Fernando Valley. And the other campus could go to the east side of Los Angeles. And this decision to sort of divide the baby and take half of it east and half of it west seemed like a good solution to the problem. Los Angeles State College continued their search for a site, and eventually they found, just on the edge of Los Angeles, next to the city of Alhambra, there was a hill. When I say hill, I mean a hill that was owned by the state, owned by the Department of Highways. How the Department of Highways got it, I don't know, maybe they don't know. But here was this—and somebody said, and they decided, why don't we cut it off? Why don't we cut the top the hill off, and put it in the _____(??) and have a flat site? And that's what they did, that's how Los Angeles State College got its site. The hill was cut down something like three hundred feet, from

where it was. And that soil dumped over into the Valley, and it made a big flat area, or at least a flat area

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_____(??)—and that's where Los Angeles is, some of you, I'm sure, have been there, seen it. Now, the location of the Valley campus went on, and I had--I can't give you much information about it. At that time, I had escrow on a house out in San Gabriel, and ready to move to the east side of town. We heard about the Valley, and knew that they were looking for sites. Now, they looked up near Hansen Dam, and that flood area below Hansen Dam. _____(??) soil samples, and for some reason that was rejected. The hill near here, down in Granada Hills, where the big veteran's hospital is, that was already owned by the federal government, but all the land right below the hill, between there and Nordhoff, was vacant. And there was forty or fifty acres of land in that area. Now, that looked like a good site, until somebody went out and spent a few hours tramping around and they suddenly noticed that the airplanes that were taking off from Van Nuys came right over. Now, at that time there was a fighter squadron assigned at Van Nuys air base, and all the planes took off north, as they still do, most_____(??). So these fighter planes were coming over, the proposed site at a height of about two or three hundred feet with their _____(??) wide open as they climbed. And somebody decided that was not the best place to put a college, so that was washed down the drain. Another, another enterprising man, a real estate company, owned land south of Ventura, in one of those canyons, and he offered to give that to the state. Sort of one of the Westwood deals, the Irving Ranch kind of thing, where they would give a hundred acres and then triple the value of the thousand that were around it. And the, the access, the cost of access roads, was finally against that. Howard MacDonald told me, one day, that he had figured out, spent how many hours in a light plane flying over the San Fernando Valley. I don't know why he didn't just ask for an aerial photograph, but at any rate, they'd get in an airplane and fly around. And I—I told him one day that I thought the best way to pick a site would have been to get in the airplane with a limited amount of gas, and then when the engine fails, let the pilot pick the site because he would pick the biggest open place available (laughter). And that would have been a scientific way of finding an open site in the San Fernando Valley. At any rate, it appeared that there were—they had finally found a site at the Birmingham Hospital. Which is now the Birmingham High School. The federal government owned thirty-six acres, and they had put in a hospital there during World War II. The hospital buildings were there, the department had declared its surplus, and the city had renovated a few of the buildings and were using them as a high school, Birmingham High School. The Van Nuys Chamber of Commerce decided that would be a good location, because they wanted it as close as they could get it to Van Nuys. The Van Nuys Chamber—this I have from Mr. James Moran who is now the field man for Warren Dorn—at that time was manager of the Van Nuys chamber, arranged for a visit by the Department of Public Works to that site, for an inspection. We can take over the old hospital buildings and hold classes right there, and everything will be hunky-dory. Unfortunately, the word leaked out to the PTA. And when the visitors came, they found

the auditorium full of PTA mothers who were protesting the end of Van Nuys High School. And the officials walked in and found there

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was a protest meeting organized by the California Congress of Parents and Teachers, which at that time and still is one of the most powerful lobbying groups in California, and they simply said, gentlemen, it's over, and just walked out with nothing to do with it. The PTA was _____(??), they were not going to _____(??) the PTA. So eventually, they settled on this particular site. I say, I don't know who made the decision. It was a hundred and sixty-five acres. Is there any chalk, right there? This is Nordhoff, this is Zelzah, this is Reseda, and it'd be about a hundred and sixty-five acres right there. Right in the center of it, right about where we are sitting now, was a ten-acre school site, it was owned by the City of Los Angeles. And I say the land was owned by these two brothers. We paid six thousand dollars, just a little less than six thousand dollars an acre. The state purchased it in 1954. One of the first things we did was to trade land with the city schools and moved that site over here. Or, which is now perfect. And so, then, the legislature approved this campus. And the, the campus was known as the San Fernando Valley Campus of the Los Angeles State College of Applied Arts and Sciences. And, (laughing)we used to kid about it of course, what a grand _____(??) it would make for a, you know, come on, old' San Fernando Valley State College, campus of the Los Angeles College of Applied Arts and Sciences. We used to contend that we were going to put our letterhead sideways so we could write it across the side of the page. It was the wish of Dr. Simpson and as near as I know of the—one of the legislature, and as near as I know, Dr. Simpson, to simply hold this campus in abeyance. They now had the land, there was an assurance that someday there would be a college here, and now they would go ahead and build the east site of Los Angeles State College, and this site would simply be held vacant. Howard MacDonald refused to accept that settlement, and we have to give Howard MacDonald the credit for saying that so long as he was president, there would be no building done unless it was done on both sites. And, consequently then, somewhat reluctantly, the legislature agreed—I want to say the legislature. It's really the State Department of Finance. The State Department of Finance agreed to put up some money to start a campus here. At that time, Dr. MacDonald felt that it was imperative that there be some action. Since, as I say, it had been kicked around so long. Dr. MacDonald was a rather impetuous man. In his—in the administration building of the Los Angeles City College, the President's office just across from the door of the President's office was the men's room. And Dr. MacDonald, one day decided that he ought to have some appointment, somebody to work up, work at San Fernando Valley State College. So, he came out of his door the same time I came out of the men's room, and that's how I got to be (laughter) Dean of San Fernando Valley State College (laughter). The—the appointment was made that I was to be Dean of the San Fernando Valley campus in July of 1955. _____(??)—I was at that time Dean of the School of Education. I was in Dr. MacDonald's office, we were discussing the appointment. And we got finally around to talking about salary. And he said that coming out as a Dean here, that the salary should be increased over what I was getting as

chairman. At that time, the Deans of the colleges were paid the same as full professors. Many people

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thought they were overpaid. MacDonald then insisted that I should be put onto a Dean's salary, if I was to take this position. So, he called whoever it was in Sacramento, I don't know, but I sat and listened to the conversation. And he said that, he was talking, he said, "No, Oviatt agreed to go out there, and we want to raise his salary." Well, apparently the person on the other end of the line said that there was no provision made for this extra money in the budget, and that I would have to come for a year at current salary. And MacDonald argued and argued and apparently the person on the other end of the line said, "Well, I think you ought to at least consult Oviatt to see whether he will take it under those circumstances." So, Dr. MacDonald said, "Now, you want me to ask Oviatt whether he will go out and be Dean for at least a year without a raise of pay?" And they said, yes. And he said, well, he's right here, I'll ask him. So, MacDonald put his hand over the phone, said, you know, when he did put his hand on the phone, he said, "Would you be willing to take this job," and then he said to me, you know, he shook his head, so, I said, "No, I will not take the job under those circumstances," (laughter) so he relayed the word back that Oviatt had refused the job, and so the pay increase came through, (laughter) which was the way in which we did business in those days. July was the first faculty appointment at San Fernando Valley State College. For the year 1955, I was the only appointment. I could hold a faculty meeting in a telephone booth. (laughter) Whenever I sat down, I declared it to be a faculty meeting. And it was a very interesting year. The first task we had, well, the first thing I did was to come out and find out where it was, I'd never even been out in the San Fernando Valley at the time that I took the position. I came out one Sunday afternoon, and this, this land we were on here was all walnut, big walnut orchard here, and some orange orchard. There was one vacant spot over where the parking lot is near Zelzah, that was open, that was a pumpkin field or squash field or something, right in that area. The, the question then of finding a place, getting acquainted. I came out one Sunday afternoon and stopped, parked my car on Nordhoff, and was standing looking at this orchard, I don't know what I thought I would see, but I was standing there. There was—the fellow who lives in the pink house, or lived in the pink house across there, there's a god-awful colored pink house that used to be pink across there, he was mowing his lawn, and I began to talk to him, and he found that I was with the college, and he said this is tremendous. He said, "This college is the greatest thing that's ever happened." And he went on enthusing about the college. So, I said to him, "Sir, ten years from now, some morning you're going to wake up, and a fraternity will have put a tombstone right where you're standing in center of your lawn, as a prank. I said, "I hope that day you agree that this is still the greatest thing that ever happened." And I said, "You're going to be flooded with students, they're going to park in your lawn, they're going to throw their beer, or they'll park in your streets, they'll throw beer cans on your lawn, and I said, you're going to think they're a nuisance." So, I said, "Remember this conversation." I don't know what ever happened, I've never seen this person ever. In

the meantime, his neighbor sued us. When we were landscaping this land, we'd get these Santa Ana winds, and all this area, the

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trees had been cut down, all this area was plowed up, you know, and it would blow clouds of dust across. And there was a regular protest movement of the owners on the south side of Nordhoff against the college. They came over, en masse, and so Mr. Masters met with them, and he advised them to sue the State of California, which they did, they went to court and entered a suit against the state of California because the blowing of the dust, and that's how we got our first sprinkler system. Mr. Masters had been asking for sprinklers and was not able to get them until there was a threatened suit. And that's how we got the sprinklers. Well, the first important task, or one of the important tasks, was to set the, the projected enrollments of this college. Because all of financing of the state colleges from that time to this depended on what we call FTE, full-time equivalents. The number of faculty we get, the number of buildings we get, the number of library books we get, virtually everything is on a formula basis, and the key figure in the formula is the enrollment. The first thing I did was to look at the enrollments that were projected for San Fernando Valley State College. At that time, the Department of Finance was making all of these decisions, and incidentally they still make most of them. But that time, they made virtually all of them. And they had, in their employment, a man named Dr. Carl Frizan. Dr. Carl Frizan was their demographer, he was the man who made the projections. He would project how many people are going to live in the San Joaquin Valley in the year 1980, therefore the Department of Highways ought to do thus and so. He was the man who would indicate how many people were going to live on the coast of north of San Francisco, and so another department would do thus and so. But the population movement and the population growth were so crucial, do you see, to practically everything. Where will be put state hospitals? Where will we put state parks? Where will we put this facility, and that facility, well, it depends on where the people are, do you see? So, you can see that the question of a forecasting population in the state of California, at that time was a tremendously crucial thing. And the population was coming in at tremendous rates. Just for example, I went to a PTA conference, I was a guest at a PTA conference. And, to illustrate to the guests the rate of growth, all day long they had on the stage a little schoolhouse. And, I think it was at ten-minute intervals or fifteen-minute intervals, a nurse would walk out, regardless of what was happening, and drop a doll into the schoolhouse, representing a new birth in the San Fernando Valley. She came out during the minister's prayer, just quietly right in the middle of prayer, and plunk, dropped this doll in and rang a bell. All day long, every ten minutes a new doll was dropped into the––you see, to try to illustrate to these people how fast the birth rate was continuing. We figured the population rise in the San Fernando Valley at that time, was, I forgot, just astronomical, I've forgotten the exact details. Well, we had a hundred and sixty-five acres. As I say, Carl Frizan was making, was making population predictions all over the state of California, and he made them for the state colleges. And he projected San Diego at twenty thousand, and Los Angeles at ten thousand, and Fresno at twelve thousand,

and San Francisco and so forth. And the San Fernando Valley was projected at five thousand. Now, at that time, there was

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about three quarters of a million people living in San Fernando. And it seemed to me unrealistic to think that five thousand students could serve this area because, quite frankly, this at that time, was the largest metropolitan area in the United States without a four-year institution. You couldn't find another city with three quarters of a million people that didn't have at least one college in it except the San Fernando Valley. So we undertook that to challenge Mr. Frizan. And Mr. Frizan, I went to see, and was—he was a very nice, a very capable man. And I said, how did you project five thousand students for the San Fernando Valley? And he said, just guess, just a guess. And I said, how did you project so many thousands for Fresno? Well, he showed me. And he had developed a formula, and the formula was a very simple one. He took all the students from grade one, and all the students in grade two, and all the students in grade three, and so on, let's make this _____(??), all the way up to grade twelve, and then into college. And he took the service area, said Fresno was in—we'll serve this particular area, and he went to the school census and simply got these figures. And he found, do you see here, that there were ten thousand students, let us say, in there, and that there were twelve thousand grade two, and twelve-fifty in grade three, and it peaked up to about grade six, and then it trailed off down here to where, in grade twelve, there were eight thousand students, and then two thousand here, and then whatever it was to be on top here. And he took this ratio, do you see, then he said, if this ratio is true, then you can tell how many of these grade one students are going to be in college. Just by following through on this _____(??). And I said, "Why don't you do it for us?" And he said," I couldn't get the figures for your service area. You're part of Los Angeles." And he said, "I can't get the figures out of Los Angeles to know which are in the Valley, and which aren't." Well, all you have to do is go down to the Board of Education and ask them. So, I went down to the board of education and asked if they could open their books, and they did. We took all the schools in the San Fernando Valley, all the high schools and the public schools in the San Fernando Valley, and got exactly the same figures Mr. Frizan had gotten. And then, I went to the City of Glendale and got all of theirs. I went to the city of Burbank and got all of theirs. And then, I said that we'll use this as the base. It's true, we'll draw later from Ventura, and we'll draw from Santa Monica, but we'll just forget them for now. We'll just assume that we're serving Glendale and Burbank in the San Fernando Valley. And we used exactly his formula and projected it, and it came out––using Mr. Frizan's projections, San Fernando Valley State College had been set at ten thousand, not five. So, I went to Sacramento with these figures, and asked for an appointment with Mr. Frizan, and we spent a half a day going over the figures, and he double-checked them, and he said, "Okay, we'll change it." And so, at that, San Fernando Valley State College was then projected into ten thousand. And the important thing was, that the land base for all the projections for the size of the buildings, do you see? The art building, for example, and the library, all of these buildings were scaled to

the projected enrollment. Now, that's why that was important that we have a reasonable projection as to building size. We have been fortunate in having gotten some

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rather large buildings at a time when the legislature and—well, not the legislature, but the Department of Architecture and the Department of Finance were very much against the kind of, of structures that we were putting up. They wanted us to put up a building half the size of the art building. They wanted it to put up a library half the size of the present library. They nearly died when we suggested the size of the science building that we wanted, and so on, you see. Now, I have to give Warner Masters credit, because it was his, his insistence on these buildings that we should have the size that we got. Otherwise, we would have had a very different kind of campus because the buildings would have been small, and it would have had to have been repeated in all that they could planned all open land that we have on this campus would have been cluttered up with small buildings. If the art building had been two stories high, we would now had to have another building. If the music building had been half as big, we'd had to have another building. And do you see what that would have done in terms of our land? So we agreed, I say we, several others who were here, agreed that we would hold out for buildings that were scaled at least somewhere close to the ten thousand figure. And we also agreed that we would make multiple use of the buildings. Now this, you see, what we had to do, in fact, was to say to the School of Business that you will have to occupy space in the art building. Now, the School of Business naturally didn't like that kind of a decision, or at least, you know, they wanted their own building. Because they could have specialized facilities, and it would be called the School of Business, you see? This kind of thing. But we had faculty meetings, and a matter of fact, we had a faculty meeting every week in those early years. And we discussed the whole matter with the faculty, and we agreed as a faculty that we would, we would use this plan, stick to this plan of big buildings with multiple use. And that means, and we knew it then, that there would be at least ten years when some schools would not have any building that they could call their own, and the School of Education, today, for example, still has no building, despite the fact that they have been probably the biggest school on this campus, one of the biggest schools, since we began. There still is no school of education building on this campus, and there's no, really, School of Business building on this campus, and so on. And that decision grew out, whether it was right or wrong, that was the basis on which we agreed to go. The department that refused, first the Department of Architecture or the Department of Finance, refused to buy the concept, and we advised President MacDonald not to sign the document that the Department of Finance insisted that the buildings should be scaled at five thousand, which had been their original estimate. And Mr. MacDonald, bless his heart, said okay. If you fellows want to, we will refuse to sign the papers. And so, he notified them that unless the buildings were such and such a size, the college administration would refuse to sign the papers and they would have to build them against the express opposition of the college. And at this point, they broke down and said, Okay, we will build the larger buildings. Also, the hundred and sixty-five acres, now that we have the projection for ten thousand, was too

small. And so they agreed that we would buy the land, I've forgotten just where it is, I think it's right about in here, an

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additional eighty acres up to Lassen Street. So, in 1954, we had paid six thousand dollars an acre. In 1956, we bought another additional eighty-three, paid about, as I recall, about twelve thousand dollars an acre for that land. This is Devonshire, right here was Devonshire Downs. And that was a fairground, and there was annual events and so on here. Does Dr. Stelck tell you about this? He was on the board about that time, when that was still in existence.

DS: Fifty-first agricultural—

DO: Fifty-first agricultural district, Max—what was Max's name?

DS: Was a good Bavarian.

DO: Yeah, it was a good Bavarian name. And how Max Schoenfeld, Max Schoenfeld used to walk around in a big cowboy hat and high heel boots, and ran his little empire here. Now, Mr. Schoenfeld was ambitious. He wanted to expand and get the land that was west of where he was. And so, he came and proposed that the college and he should work in conjunction, and try and buy all of this land. And eventually, that's what happened. And they eventually purchased all of this land, and that was about 1960, as I recall, and at that time, we paid twenty five thousand dollars an acre. For this remaining land. By that time, these, these figures were outdated, of course. And there were all kinds of figures now being bandied around, everybody had his projection. And at one time, there was an official projection for this college, came out from the Sacramento of thirty-seven thousand and five hundred and _____(??). At any rate, the whole question, now of land base became very important. And Mr. Alan Miller, who was our Assemblyman, now is a judge, sponsored a bill in the agri—or in the legislature to do away with the fifty-first agricultural district. Now, I'm not sure why Mr. Alan made this move. I know that he and Mr. Schoenfeld were at loggerheads, and I've often wondered if it was just simply a matter of personal spite at Mr. Schoenfeld, I'm not sure, I wouldn't want anyone to suggest that to Mr. Miller. But at any rate, Mr. Miller had an act in legislature that said that the fifty-first agricultural district would go out of existence, the land would revert to the state, and would be held for the use of Los—of San Fernando Valley State College. He couldn't get it through the legislature with that wording, until finally they added, or other educational use. Or it said public use. At any rate, there was a little phrase that said, the land would be used for the Valley College, or for other either education or public use, I've forgotten what it is. On that basis, the bill passed, and the fifty-first agricultural district went out of existence, and Devonshire Downs became the property. Now, I have to tell you, this, that one of the opposition groups, the San Fernando Valley State College, getting that land was the Chancellor's office. We held meetings on this campus in which the Chancellor and his representatives asked that that—and argued that that land should not be given to the college. And the

reasoning behind it was, if you get this much land, what are we going say to San Jose? San Jose is boxed in on twenty acres. What are we going say to San Diego? San Diego is boxed in on

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sixty acres, forty acres. You are asking— you have three hundred acres, or something of this sort. And if we get that for you, you know, you are putting us in such a situation that we can't resist pressure elsewhere. And so, this stalled, for some time, until finally, finally the legislature agreed that we should have even more land than this, and we then proceeded to buy this piece of land in here. And of course, that had houses on it and multiple owners, and eventually it was purchased—it went for a number of years, but as I recall it, cost the state a thousand, a hundred thousand dollars an acre to purchase this land. Well, you see what kind of a campus it has given us, sort of a panhandle arrangement—coincidentally, we did not, we did not get this. The outline of the campus is now like so. You see, we have this long panhandle arrangement up here. In the meantime, the master planning for the campus had gone ahead, and it had put all the concentration of the academics right at this end, do you see? So, if you ever wonder why we were so stupid to put the building so far away from the other end of our land, it's because, at the time that we made the master plan, we had only this. These have all been added.

USP: I still don't understand whether we own Devonshire Downs or not—

DO: Yes, we do.

USP: On what terms, on what—on a lease, or—

DO: No, it's owned.

USP: And we rent it out, or—

DO: Yes, it's the state actually insists that the upkeep of it is a charge against the college, and so, they're against the foundation of a college, and the college, then, has to make as much money as it can, because I've forgotten what it costs now, to—for the maintenance and so on, and the college is charged with that much money. So, if we don't make money off it, the money that we don't make in Devonshire Downs has to come out of teacher's salaries, or something else. You see?

USP: That was kind of a—

DO: Well, as I say, it's given us an awkward shaped campus, but you can see here, the kind of escalation of values that had gone on, the—I can tell you a little personal anecdote. There was, just west of the college, a little, rather attractive Spanish-type bungalow when I came out here. And I was riding around with a real estate man looking for a home. As we drove past this, I said, "How much, you know, do you suppose that's for sale?" And he said, "Well, I don't know, but if—I'll go and find out if you like." And I said, "How much will it cost?" And he said, "Well, it will probably cost you between thirty-five

and forty thousand dollars." And I said, "Don't bother to ask. I'm looking for something half that much." So, we drove on. Within a year, that man who owned that piece of land came to me and asked if we would support rezoning, if we would oppose rezoning, and I said, "Yes, we would." And he said, "I wish you wouldn't, he said, I can sell it for fifty-five thousand dollars if I can get it rezoned." I said, "I'm sorry Mr. Glenn, but we will have to oppose rezoning." Two years later, or three years later, the state bought the land. It's now a parking lot, and the state paid two hundred thousand dollars for that piece of land. And I still lay awake at night, (laughter) think what I would have done if I had been smart enough to buy a piece of property. Well, so much then for this physical development. I've talked about the library, that was our first building, was the library. Well, our first permanent building. Let me go back now to 1955 and talk about the academics. I was —

USP: Dr. Oviatt. Right here, I don't want to miss any of this.

DO: And he'd sold it for ten or twelve, but he'd held it since before the war, so it's all right.

DO: This land was all one owner. The seventeen acres, I think we got seventeen acres in there. We got eighty acres there, we got a hundred and sixty-five acres here, I think we got twenty-two acres or twenty-three acres in the Downs, and then we got the rest, and I think we have a total of, what, three hundred and twenty-eight acres now? I think it was something like three hundred and twenty-eight. The—

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]