

## San José State College Becomes a University

In the fall of 1960, three new faculty members were provided primitive office space on campus in a temporary shack, designated B-11. It was a World War II Quonset hut, set down near where the statues of Tommie Smith and John Carlos are presently located. I was one of those new hires, along with my friend Ted Norton. The third was the sociologist Snell ("Mick") Putney, who was married to Gladys Putney, also a sociologist. When the Putneys published their first scholarly monograph, *The Adjusted American*, the publisher thought the book would have more appeal if Gladys' name were sexier. Therefore the book was published under the names of Snell and Gail Putney. Mick was eager to have his wife hired by the college, but an anti-nepotism policy prevented this from happening for several years. Eventually, the now-named Gail was hired as a full-time faculty member, and after divorcing Mick and marrying an artist named Stan Fullerton, Gail soon moved up the administrative ladder to become the first female, the 21<sup>st</sup> president of the university, serving from 1978-1991.

Over the course of the years since then, other scholarly couples were hired and many women appointed to the highest administrative posts on campus. A veritable revolution was taking place as San Jose State underwent a transformation from a state teachers college to a major university.

At the recent inauguration of Mohammad Qayoumi as the 28<sup>th</sup> president, I calculated that I have personally seen 40% of all the presidents of our now-called University. I remember well when John T. Wahlquist, the 17<sup>th</sup> president, decided to retire and was replaced by Robert D. Clark in 1964. It was a momentous occasion. Clark was the first president to be chosen under a new structure that had been created in 1960, namely, that of a State College system headed by a Chancellor. Clark lost little time in taking advantage of the winds of change that helped shape San Jose State as we know it today.

The period following the end of World War II saw the huge ballooning of college and university enrollments, the result of the G.I. Bill of Rights. Of the fifteen million armed forces, about eight million enrolled in institutions of higher education. San Jose State College experienced that enrollment growth, which necessitated the hiring of additional faculties. Most of the new hires, the product of prestigious doctoral-granting universities, were dissatisfied with the teachers college aspect of SJSC. This was one of the reasons that Wahlquist resigned—he was well suited for a teacher's college, but he saw the incoming waves, and thus made room for change, which Robert Clark immediately began initiating as chief executive.

On his first day, Clark addressed the faculty in Morris Dailey auditorium. His speech recalled C. P. Snow's description of the academic schism between two cultures, the liberal arts one on the one hand, and the sciences on the other. Clark hoped to bridge that gap by emphasizing interdisciplinary cooperation. But

as the newer hires in that 1964 faculty applauded his remarks, the older, teacher-college oriented faculty had difficulty in comprehending or accepting the new president's ideas.

Clark quickly showed his determination to begin the process of transforming the college. First, in governance, he informed the faculty that the title "department head" was abolished. That title had been given to whomever the president designated to be the chief of a department, with little or no input from that department's faculty. Henceforth, that position would be called Department Chair, and it was the duty of that department's faculty to select and nominate the Chair whom the president would confirm. The faculty, for the most part, was overjoyed in having a voice in the selection of their Chair. But the new policy initiated a virtual war between the newer faculty hires and the old teacher college faculty: about half of all department heads resigned and returned to classroom teaching. By the time Robert Clark left a few years later, most of the older faculty had either retired or become resigned to the new structure.

Clark undertook a multi-faceted effort to bring about interdisciplinary education. He encouraged experimental pilot programs like Tutorials and New College and paved way for the Humanities Honors Program to become an established department, which, in time, would include both Religious Studies and Creative Arts.

Before he retired, Wahlquist had been forced by the new system's Board of Trustees to establish an advisory body of faculty called the "Academic Council." In its first years this unit was a pale shadow of what it was to become when it was renamed the "Academic Senate." This was Robert Clark's achievement. He constantly exhorted the Senate to assume more meaningful powers, from symbolically having its Chair introduce the president at the annual address before the faculty, to having members of its executive committee participate with the president and his advisory body of administrators in discussing and deliberating the outstanding issues.

Foremost among these issues was the treatment of minorities, whose spokespersons made clear their resentment over the discrimination they experienced on and around campus. It was my suggestion, at an executive committee meeting, that an ombudsman position be created to help deal with this problem and President Clark not only accepted the idea but said he knew just the right person for the position: J. Benton White, an ordained minister who came onto the campus as its first Ombudsman. Further, Clark gave support to Tommie Smith and John Carlos, whose Black Power salute at the Olympic Games in Mexico unleashed a national and international controversy. Further, Clark encouraged the Academic Senate to enact a policy recommendation to allow a larger proportion of minority applicants to enter the college despite not being in the top one-third of eligible high school students. Prior to this, the only higher education facility such students were eligible to attend was a junior college.

Clark's proposal was enacted and is now the pattern throughout the California State University system.

Finally, in 1968, Clark had to confront a strike by over one hundred faculty members. Ronald Reagan, the Governor of California, had a hostile attitude toward higher education. He had already fired Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, and he encouraged the CSU Chancellor, Glen Dumke, to dismiss all strikers for violating the "five day rule," whereby anyone absent from work for five days was subject to termination. Clark, on the other hand, took a more sympathetic attitude towards the strikers, whose work stoppage neither lasted very long nor achieved anything concrete. He conveyed that perspective to the Academic Vice President, Hobert ("Bert") Burns. Burns appointed a three person faculty committee, consisting of Ted Norton, Political Science, Robert Wrede, Mathematics, and Peter Buzanski, History, to consider the case of the strikers and to submit a report on each. Since I served as Chair of that committee I can state that we found that with one single exception all of the strikers taught their classes and met their obligations, except they either taught their classes in a different room, or at a different time, or even at different locations, thus maintaining that they were striking. In each of those cases, the committee voted unanimously our recommendation that the five day rule had not been violated. The one exception was that of the head of a fledgling faculty union, an Associate Professor of Psychology, the late Eldred E. Rutherford. When our committee interviewed him and asked, as we had asked every other striker, what he had done during the strike, Rutherford's reply was "when Rutherford strikes, he strikes. He does not teach." In that case, our committee voted 3-0 that Rutherford had violated the five day rule, and the University terminated him. Thereafter, after many years and litigation, Rutherford was rehired and his faculty rights restored.

As a result of these and other policies, President Robert Clark faced much opposition and a few lawsuits, but when he left five years later to assume the presidency of the University of Oregon, he could take pride in having accomplished much of what he set out to do. I believe SJSU is the better for these efforts to this day.