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2,000 students, a glorified high school.*

## W.H. Timmons

Faculty, 1949-1978

In 1949 I came to UTEP. I completed my degree, a Ph.D. in Latin American history, at the University of Texas, wrapping up a doctorate on the GI Bill after World War II. I had a history professor in college [who] turned me on. So it was history from that point on, with a B.A. from Park College and an M.A. from the University of Chicago, where I had gotten interested in Latin American history. I switched to the University of Texas and started the doctorate there, just before Pearl Harbor. Well, of course, my doctorate was interrupted by World War II, but then I went back on the agenda of the Ph.D.

Jobs were hard to get then in history. This [position] was about the only opening that I came across. It was Dr. [J.L.] Waller\*, the chairman of the department here, who hired me. My wife and I decided, "We'll try this school for a year and in the meantime look around for something decent." It wasn't very well known. It had just become Texas Western College after having been the College of Mines for a number of years. But the place took hold.

There were a lot of things about the department that I liked. Dr. Waller was just the epitome of a gentleman and a scholar. The History Department was a fairly strong department at that time. I saw a possibility for



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teaching Latin American history and Mexican history right here on this border. I didn't move into the Latin American field for quite a while, because back in those days it was the Department of History, Government, and Sociology. So for quite a while I taught, besides the American survey, a survey course in European history and government courses, but eventually I worked into U.S. diplomatic history and then into Mexico.

We liked El Paso, and we liked the college. I decided that there would be a satisfaction in contributing to a school of this size that obviously was going to grow. Texas Western was a small little school at that time, 2,000 students, a glorified high school. There was a small and congenial faculty, but the sororities ran the school. They won all of the school elections, they were the cheerleaders, they did Homecoming, they did it all. And everybody went home at noon. The chairman of the History Department and the president of the school played golf two or three afternoons a week, and there wouldn't be an automobile anywhere on campus after twelve o'clock. It was kind of a country club.

I consider myself a member of what I call the middle generation of faculty. That was because as the school came more and more over into the Liberal Arts, away from engineering and mining, a number of Ph.D.'s were hired in the late 1930s to head up the departments. Some very able, dependable people were hired, and I'll never forget them: Tony Berkman\*, [C.A.] Puckett\*, Gene Thomas\* in engineering, [C.L.] Sonnichsen\* in English. You obviously could see that they were trying to build a foundation there of academic quality. Now I came in some years later, in the late '40s, along with Joe Leach, Francis Fugate, [and Olav E.] Eidbo. They were trying to hire Ph.D.'s, and they very definitely were trying to improve academic quality. The next generation, the generation of the '60s and '70s, is where you got a tremendous influx of faculty. So I'm that middle generation that can see both back and forward.

I'm not so sure whether [the students] have changed a great deal. I think we have a better institution now academically than the one that I came to. To be sure, the student body was smaller, the faculty and the classes were smaller, and there was a closer relationship with students, very definitely a much closer relationship then. But academically, intellectually, I think students are about the same and have been just pretty much the same all along. I went back after my retirement and taught a freshman course, and I didn't think that they'd improved that much. Maybe,



by virtue of TV, I think they're perhaps somewhat better informed generally about the world they live in, but I can't see any great amount of differences from their academic performance now as opposed to twenty [or] thirty years ago.

I think that there was a much more active social life back in the old days than there is now. The students were proud of what they had, of their student body, and they played an active role in institutional affairs. I can remember chaperoning the dances. You knew all the students, and they knew you. Somehow they'd manage to find funds to bring in big name bands. It was marvelous! Tony Berkman was a dean of men back in those days, and he was a disciplinarian from way back. He was at all the social functions, and there were plenty of them. If he was there at the dance, and usually he was, your job as chaperone, well, you had it made! You could go dance, because he did all the work. He'd take down names; he'd round up all the drunks.

Socially the students were very active. They must have spent a lot more time on social activities than they did on the books! And oh boy, those sororities watched their gals! Boy! I can remember the gal in charge of Zeta Tau Alpha, when I flunked one of her gals. Boy, she was on me. But it was good, though, because they did teach girls the social graces, and they did watch over their studies, too.

One memorable event comes to mind — the 1963 *Flowsheet*. It was dedicated [to me]. That was quite an honor, and I deeply appreciated it. Another one that comes to mind — in 1977 I won the AMOCO teaching award. That recognition was wonderful, and I was proud of [it]. Another highlight was that we had one of the first Peace Corps projects anywhere in the country in 1961. You remember how John F. Kennedy turned professors and students on. It was a project to train surveyors and engineers who were going to go to Tanganyika and build roads. We had about forty of the Peace Corpsmen. Of course, the geologists here were heavily involved. Clyde Kelsey was director of the whole project, and I was associate director. They were a fun bunch. They were so dedicated, and they wanted so much to do a job for the country. There was a spirit that I don't think I've ever seen before or since.

At the end of the project, President Joseph Ray\* and Kelsey were invited to the White House for a reception. All the Peace Corps members were invited, too, the whole bunch. Well, Kelsey couldn't go! No, he had to



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oversee a project he had going in Colombia. So President Joe Ray and I went to the White House to the reception. And this is the hand that shook the hand of JFK! I remember he came out of his office with his entourage, and we had a little get-together in the Rose Garden at the White House. He made a little speech, and he used some of the same language that he used in his inaugural. We had a wonderful time. That was obviously a highlight.

I'm going to mention one more that I'll never forget. I taught that course on Mexico for a number of years, but more and more we began to get students from Juarez. And it made an impression on them. Here was a "maldito gringo" teaching these Mexican students about the history of their country. It made an impression upon me, and I just tried that much harder. I tried to get the story through to them. They were wonderful to work with. But their [prior] knowledge just didn't amount to very much. They'd heard of Miguel Hidalgo and Benito Juarez, but that's about the extent of it. I hope they learned a lot.

One anecdote that comes to mind concerns [C.A.] Puckett\*, who was dean of arts and sciences. Dean Puckett was a "one and only." [His] middle name was "catalog" — right to the letter, *always* right to the letter. So I was teaching an advanced course, and I had this very fine student, straight A's in college so far, but the requirements for an advanced course back in those days were junior standing plus six hours of history and six hours of other social science. This particular student was a little older than most and very conscientious, [but] she was short of junior standing. I wasn't going to let that stand in [the way] because she could do the work. This comes up before Puckett, and I explained my position. I was absolutely certain that she was an excellent student, just top notch, and I had no doubt in my mind that she would have no problems in the course. Puckett finally looks up, looks me straight in the eye, and says, "I agree with everything you say, but the answer is no."

I remember teaching a course in European history, and we were on the background of World War I. I was dealing with the diplomatic crisis of 1914. I was going along — oh, I was eloquent! — that's right, building tension, building tension, building tension all the time. And just then some [airplane] broke the sound barrier, and the class just about gave a bark. I think I had said that an explosion could take the place at any time, and then we got this [sonic boom] up in the sky! I'm left speechless! The



only thing I can say is, "Well, back in my graduate school days a professor told me that you always have to have a sense of the dramatic, so this is it!" Those are the things, obviously, that you don't ever forget.

I became chairman in 1962 of the Department of History, Government, and Sociology. Right away, they took two-thirds of it away. Nobody was happier about that than I was. Government was set up as Political Science on its own; Sociology the same thing. I welcomed the change because I could focus on History, and we had some hiring to do. Then, after about three years, I simply decided, "Well, we've cleaned up most of the problems, and somebody else can do this thing. I've got other things to do." So from that time it's been a rotational arrangement, which I think is [good]. I think it's worked reasonably well, because one guy doesn't get bogged down with the paper[work] for the rest of his life.

I've never had too many disappointments. I can remember back in the 1950s, though, when money was tight. If you got a two hundred dollar increase, boy! But those were awfully hard days, and there were a lot of people my age getting a two hundred dollar a year raise, and families are coming along, and the oldest one is going to be hitting college. . . . So these were things of rather deep concern.

This institution has been very good to me. Now I'm going to tell you what I think was my major contribution to this institution. [It] is the microfilm program in the Library\*. We had a committee of community people called Mission '73 to look over the institution to make recommendations. I was impressed by the language in Mission '73. They put out a little booklet, and quite naturally [it concluded], as many committees have said, "Take advantage of your geographical locations. Do those things to exploit your geographical location here on the border." I took this to heart. So I went to Joe Ray, and I told him that I would put up a thousand dollars if he would come up with four thousand dollars, to get a program started in which we would start microfilming some of the basic printed documentary collections at U.T. Austin, [from] that marvelous Latin American library. We focused first on printed materials, particularly the source materials. He went along with it, and we went to work. After two years, we had five thousand dollars' worth of microfilm of printed source materials from the Latin American collection in Austin.

Well, I said to Joe Ray, "I just consider this Phase One. Let's move it forward. I'll put up another thousand, and you put up whatever you



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can to go along with my one, and we'll start work in Chihuahua." We already had the records of the ayuntamiento of Ciudad Juarez. That had already been done. That was the beginning. We picked up right there, and we bought the Parral [Archive]. We did one in Janos; we did a major job in Chihuahua City — 700 reels. We did the *Periódico Oficial* of Chihuahua, Chihuahua's leading newspaper. And we did that pretty well, working with Francisco Almada, Chihuahua's distinguished historian. Everything we microfilmed, we left a copy in Mexico. Mexico always got a copy of everything we did. Then we started working in Durango. It turned out, for my two thousand dollars, I guess I must have gotten ten or fifteen thousand dollars' worth of [microfilmed materials]. Scholars around the country know about it, and it's brought them here to El Paso. So I have to say I consider that to be my major contribution.

This school has been very good to me. The decision to retire in 1978 is one that I shall never regret, simply because it's a brand new life for me. I'm doing things that I had to put off through the years. You're born again. You can travel. You can do things you want to do when you want to do them. You can get some writing done. You can help with the historical organizations here locally. This school's been very good to me. This city's been very good to me. And I'm glad to have been a part of it.

Interviewed by Vicki L. Ruiz, October 19, 1983, El Paso.

*The University of Texas System was not integrated at the faculty level. . . . I had no idea that there were no blacks.*

## Marjorie P. Lawson

[1938-1984]

Faculty, 1966-1984

*They were still testing the waters in a sense, because I would imagine I was the first black administrator of an academic unit in the U.T. System.*

## Juan O. Lawson

Faculty, 1967-Present

*Marjorie:* I went to Howard University in Washington, D.C., and really finished growing up there. I took my master's immediately after my undergraduate degree, and so by that time I had matured, and I had become just about a fixture at Howard. When I started working on my master's, I became a graduate assistant, and I got a chance to [teach freshman English] for very little money. When I got my master's, I got a chance to do the same thing as an instructor for very little money.

*Juan:* I was in the army. I was a reserve officer, so I had a two-year



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active duty requirement. They sent me here because I was air defense artillery. I had no idea really of where El Paso was. Well, I had a general idea by looking at the map, but all I knew about it was cowboy pictures. We came out here to serve in the military and stayed. That was 1965 through 1967.

*Marjorie:* Dear Fort Bliss brought us to El Paso. I was an army wife with no job for the first time in my adult life. It just felt marvelous at first, and then it felt unnatural. I went to Texas Western and applied [for a teaching job], not having any idea what the situation was. Dr. John West, [the chair of the English Department], the bravest man I know, took a chance and hired me in 1966. I didn't fully realize what daring he was displaying. The University of Texas System was not integrated at the faculty level, instructor and above. I had no idea that there were no blacks. I hadn't thought about it; I just needed a job.

I can't remember any unpleasantness because of race. By the time I came here, I was a veteran in the classroom. So although I'm very shy socially, in the classroom I take charge, and there was never any problem. The students did mistake me for a Mexican-American. I'm not obviously black. My eyes aren't dark, and at that time many Mexican-Americans were about my complexion. I've gotten much browner [since then]. It's been seventeen years of Texas sun! I got many strange looks when I said, "I don't speak Spanish."

*Juan:* I know a little bit more about the behind-the-scenes business when my wife was hired. When Marjorie applied, initially she was rejected, but nicely. Dr. John West indicated to her that he really wanted to hire her, but he was having a little bit of a problem, and that if he were to take that bold step, he wanted a Ph.D. [rather than someone with an M.A.]. Then he tested the waters, and a month or so later he called back.

[In the meantime] he had approached the then dean [of the College of Liberal Arts], Ray Small. Dean Small was a man of forward thinking in race relations. He didn't seem to have any problems in that regard. He took it to the president, then Joe Ray\*, and Dr. Ray didn't seem to have any problem. They were all worried about the immediate supervisor, their administrative supervisor. Then Dr. Ray told me what happened. He said that he wanted to do it [hire Marjorie], but he had a problem with the Board of Regents, and he didn't know what to do. He called one of his friends on the Board, who happened to be a little forward on



the matter, and asked him how to handle the situation. His instructions from the man were: "Hire, but don't send any pictures."

I started a year later [in 1967]. The climate had changed a bit more. I think the U.T. System was beginning to open up. And since my wife had been hired, then they hired me. At that time the College of Liberal Arts had been split. The College of Science had been completed, and a new dean had been hired, Dr. Lewis Hatch. His first year was my first year. He saw me walking around with my uniform on, and he had gotten wind that I was applying for a job. He saw me going down to the Physics office, and when I came back he was waiting for me.

He asked [if] the chairman had hired me. I told him no; there was some problem that they were discussing. The problem wasn't with the chairman. The chairman was worried about what his superiors would say. Dr. Hatch, being brand new, picked up the phone, called the chairman, used a number of choice words, slammed the phone down, and told me to go back down there. So I went back down there, and I was hired. When I came back, Dr. Hatch asked if I got the job. I said, "Yes." He said, "Fine." That's how I was hired — as not the first but the second [black faculty member]. But at least I was the first black male with a Ph.D.

[As for reactions], in my case, some of the faculty members were from different parts of the country, and they were curious. I'm obviously black, so they didn't have any problems identifying me, and they were curious. Naturally they wanted to know where I was from. They wanted to know about my first name; it was an anomaly. Of course it is, because [there is] no cultural basis for me to have a Spanish first name. They would engage me in conversations. I guess they were really trying to find out if I were real, if I were reasonably intelligent.

Then they would appoint me to committees. I was on too many committees, because they wanted to have a black on the committee. Sometimes as an assistant professor they put me on committees with full professors. I really didn't belong there because I didn't have the experience, but they put me there anyway. They would give me assignments, and without really meaning to, they would often express a little surprise if I could do a job well. Of course, they weren't intending to be mean or insensitive. It was just their first reaction, and they seemingly were surprised if I did certain things well. As time went on, I was generally accepted, and they saw me as an individual without regard to my complexion.



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During those early years I did make some lasting friendships with several faculty members. Ken Beasley I think of as one very sensitive man with regard to racial issues. He and I met one time when we were serving on a presidential committee. He took me under his wing, so to speak, not in a condescending fashion, but he seemingly just liked me for some reason or another. When he became dean of the Graduate School, he brought me with him and made me the assistant dean. I enjoyed the job with him, and of course that gave me an opportunity to meet all of the other administrators.

I recognized that I needed to do a little bit more academically, so that I could be legitimate in whatever I was doing. I did discuss that matter with Dr. Beasley, because I knew about a number of minorities getting into various positions by virtue of tokenism, or whatever you want to call it, in the university systems across the country, but not really pursuing those things which they should if they wished to be academicians. I went back to my department with the understanding that I'd do my work, publish a number of papers, which I did, and become more academically qualified for my promotions. Dr. Hatch was behind this, too. Both of those men — Ken Beasley and Lewis Hatch — were very influential in my academic career here.

In time I had enough stuff behind me to be promoted up the line until I was full professor. A year later, Dr. Beasley had been made academic vice president, and somehow he fixed it so that I would apply for the dean's job — dean of science. They decided they didn't want an outside candidate. I was a local candidate, and my name appeared on the list. Once my name appeared on the list, that was it. I don't know whether the search committee knew that, but once my name was on the final list, that was it.

In '75 I took over as dean ad interim. Dr. [Arleigh B.] Templeton used that terminology. They were still testing the waters in a sense, because I would imagine I was the first black administrator of an academic unit in the U.T. System. They wouldn't call me acting dean. So they said dean ad interim, and they watched. They wanted to see what the faculty of the College of Science would think, how they would react. The faculty seemed to be very enlightened and open. During those years before I was promoted to full professor, I was on committees with various faculty members, and I made a number of friends. All of the science people had begun to accept me just as an individual, and race didn't play any part.

But the president and the VP didn't know what my relationship was with the faculty. So they tested me for about three or four months, and after they found out that the faculty would work with me and accept me as a supervisor, then they finally changed my designation to dean. That was in March of 1976.

I think that El Paso is a good place because of the multicultural atmosphere. Newcomers are somewhat forced to be reasonable with regard to intercultural and interracial relationships. I think that was a big factor in the way we were accepted here. What was necessary for me, though, was to prove myself. Most black people find this to be the case. Now, everyone has to prove himself, but as I perceive it, a black person has to make sure that he proves his capabilities. That was a personal goal I had in mind all during that time, because of my daddy's influence. [He would say,] "Always prove, son, that you are as good as or better than." So I would not allow myself to get caught up in those things which I knew weren't really important for whatever goals I was trying to achieve. My daddy made that clear to me as I was growing up.

Here I've had a little difficulty with my children. In the earlier years they didn't really understand that they were black, going to the schools that they had been going to. They didn't realize that there was any difference. Then when [a] very few people would insult them racially, they would come home, and they just couldn't understand that. I think they're understanding through my explanations, but still their experiences are far different from mine. I've explained to both of them the way my dad explained it to me, that they must achieve, [that] they must put forth effort to always prove themselves. They don't feel that pressure the way I felt it, [but] a few incidents have occurred to let them know that maybe there is some truth to what Dad is saying. They are learning to cope with the situation. Although attitudes seem to have been changing for the better, we see a little fluctuation. But on the average things have moved forward, as far as we're concerned, since we first became working adults.

Interviewed by Rebecca Craver, February 27, 1984, El Paso.



*We would put our blue jeans on, roll them up to our knees . . . and wear these [full circle] skirts over them to come on campus.*

## Mimi Reisel Gladstein

Student, 1954-1956; 1958-1966

Faculty, 1966-1969; 1971-Present

I've been at UTEP almost continuously since 1954, either as a student or as a professor. I came to Texas Western College in the summer of 1954, straight out of El Paso High. Then I went away to the University of Oklahoma [for two years, but in the summers I attended Texas Western]. I moved to Germany for about a year and a half, and came back and got my bachelor's degree from Texas Western in '59. In 1960 I began my master's degree, which I completed in '66, the first year it was The University of Texas at El Paso.

Those were the halcyon days of academe, when student populations were just soaring, so I decided that I ought to go get my Ph.D. if I wanted to teach at a university. I was going to take a few courses here before I went to enroll in the Ph.D. program at the University of New Mexico. I was at registration, and John West [of the English Department] walked up to me and said, "Can you teach a freshman course for us?" I didn't have better sense than to say, "Yes." So I started that way. I went away in 1970 to work on my degree, and in 1971 I came back to UTEP as a full-time faculty member.

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When I was a student here in the summer, I was a part of the College Players, which meant I went to class in the morning and my soul belonged to the Drama Department until midnight after that. Milton Leech\* was the chair of the department, and for what he called summer stock we did five productions in six weeks. We started with a musical comedy and ended with Shakespeare, and usually in between we had some kind of mystery or melodrama. In those days there were only two faculty members [in the Drama Department], and they managed to put on this extraordinary program.

One of the [advantages] that the department had at that time was the draft. Fort Bliss was very active, and a lot of young men and women who were just beginning their professional careers had to take time out to be in the service for two years. We benefited from that because Milton had open casting, and we had people who were stationed down here who have since gone on to make quite big names for themselves in theater. We acted with them. Milton also brought in visiting professors from different places who would direct shows or do the costuming.

If you were a College Player in summer stock, you were expected to be involved in all of these five productions in some way. If you were starring in one, then you handled props in another and were building sets for a third. I was here all day long, and then rehearsal would be in the evening. After rehearsal everyone would go to the Hacienda [Restaurant] for something and save very little time to do your homework for your eight o'clock class the next morning.

One amusing [incident about clothing] illustrates how our mind-sets change. When I was in the Drama Department, we had to be building sets and painting them and dragging stuff around. Naturally the best uniform for that was jeans. But there was a rule: A young woman or a girl could not come on campus in pants. If you were seen on campus in pants, you were reported to the dean of women. What we would do is: we had these big peasant skirts in those days, full circle skirts. We would put our blue jeans on, roll them up to our knees, and wear these skirts over them to come on campus. Once we got on the stage in Magoffin [Auditorium], which is where the productions were held, then we'd take our skirts off, and we could go to work.

When I began teaching, about 1968, the first time a female student showed up in my class in pants I was shocked. I remember looking at



her and thinking, "She doesn't have the proper respect for this class." When I was here [as a student] at UTEP, all of my professors — 99 per cent of them were male — came to class in coats and ties. Women came in heels and hose. One of the ways we knew we were in college is that our professors addressed us Miss or Mister. We were now adult young people, and we would be addressed properly. And, of course, we were all dressed very properly also.

I then went for my graduate work to the University of New Mexico, which was considerably more liberal than UTEP. My professors there wore sandals and jeans and T-shirts and beads. Some of them took one look at me and my little heels and hose and bouffant hairdo and thought, "God, there's a refugee from the supermarket." It was a classic instance of reverse discrimination. I had to really fight to convince them I had any mind at all. When I returned from UNM, having been considerably radicalized by the experience, I was the first female professor to wear pants on this campus. And I love to tell the story that I thought that I was going to frizzle a lot of the gray hairs around here, but the second female professor to wear pants was Roberta Walker, who had a beautiful head of white hair. Here I had thought that wearing pants to my class was an insult in 1968, [but a few years later] wearing pants was an act of freedom.

We forget that the sixties [as a social movement] didn't begin until about '66 and really lasted until about '73. In the sixties there was a sensitivity to issues; there were students that were concerned about the political situation or [individual] rights. It meant something to them. I think now when you talk about rights in a class, the students get this glazed look on their faces. If I could make a generalization, and I think generalizations are dangerous, it seems to me that the eighties were more like the fifties. In the fifties we weren't very concerned with political ideas, and I think our students now don't pay much attention either. The students in the late sixties and early seventies were serious and concerned about the world, but that seems to have passed.

I was looking at the whole thing [the Chicano demonstration in December, 1971] from the fourth floor of the Liberal Arts Building. I was teaching in that corner room, which overlooks the Administration Building. The whole thing looked about as dangerous to me as . . . I mean, if there was an emergency I didn't see it. Of course, I had been at UNM where eleven people had been bayoneted. I'd been at UNM where I wouldn't



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teach in the Naval Arts Building because there were threats to blow it up. I had seen real riots, and what was going on here was nothing compared to what I had seen in those other places. I think in this riot there couldn't have been more than a hundred people. I saw the police out here, but [the demonstrators that] they were armed against didn't seem to be nearly as threatening. It was like bringing out your cannons to battle flies. The response seemed all out of proportion to the danger.

I remember outside groups coming to campus, like the Fourth World Coalition or something like that, brought here by MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán] and by the Black Student Union. I remember a particularly amusing sequence where they were showing a vehemently anti-American, anti-Israeli film called "We Are the Palestinians." They came here because they wanted to mobilize people on behalf of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. At this meeting one of the students from here got up and said, "How do you feel about Aztlán?" These were outside agitators from Los Angeles, and they said, "Aztlán? What's Aztlán?" And this guy said, "What are you doing, coming over here and asking us to worry about something that's half a world apart, if you're not willing to fight for Aztlán, which is our country which the gringos have taken away from us!" That was the only instance where I had first-hand knowledge of somebody from outside coming in and trying to arouse students. [Our students] said, "No way."

I never did feel that our campus was one of the hotbeds of activity. Even our streaking, which was one of those expressions of the time, was so unimaginative. They would announce that there were going to be streakers at such and such a place, which defeats the whole purpose of streaking. The whole purpose of streaking is shock. In the most unlikely place at the most unlikely time, somebody streaks through. Well, here we'd have this announcement that there're going to be streakers coming down University Avenue in front of the Liberal Arts Building. People would line up on both sides of the streets, and then a truck would drive through with about four or five naked people. I thought, "This is not exactly the zenith of social awareness here." So that's the kind of radical activity [we had] on campus in those days.

Interviewed by Rebecca Craver, March 6, 1984, El Paso.



*I would go a whole day without seeing another brown face, and that was traumatic for me.*

## Jose F. Avila

Student, 1960; 1964-1967; 1970-1974

Dean of Students, 1974-Present

I was born in Newark Maternity Hospital on the south side of El Paso. My mother and father were first-generation Americans from El Paso. Their parents, my grandparents, were all from Chihuahua. I graduated from high school in 1960 and came to Texas Western College that same year. I chose the school because — well, I think I can speak for a lot of Chicanos of my generation — you didn't think about going away. I don't believe that's changed much. Some of it is finances; some of it is family ties; some of it is ties to the culture. You go where you are, and that was Texas Western College. I didn't want to go initially, but my mother was one of those pushers, one of those "My son is going to be the best" type of people. So part of the reason I failed was that I didn't want to go. I wasn't motivated to go; I didn't care. It took me three months to realize I didn't belong, so I dropped out and joined the service.

I remember one of the reasons I left in 1960 was because I would go a whole day without seeing another brown face, and that was traumatic for me. The high school I went to was Jefferson High School. It was 97 percent Chicano and 3 percent black; there were no Anglos whatsoever.

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So when the shoe's on the other foot, and [I was] the minority *minority*, I felt awkward. To a person that had never been out of the barrio very much, to a person that had lived in the Mexican neighborhood where everything is Spanish and where Anglos don't go unless they're there to arrest somebody or to collect bills, it was traumatic [to come to TWC], and I felt out of place.

A lot of it wasn't the fault of the place; a lot of it was my own cultural adjustment. It's easy to go to a university when your parents have [already] gone and there's a foundation for you to build on. Well, I was the first in my family to ever finish high school, much less go to college. In fact, if left up to me, I never would have gone. In those days Chicanos in high school didn't talk about going to college; they talked about which branch of the service to go into. If my mother hadn't pushed me, I might have missed a great opportunity, and I'd be out there digging ditches or painting houses. So I'm grateful to her.

Another part of it was [that] high school was easy for me. I made A's, I never had to hustle, and when I did screw up, the teacher was there to remind me. [But] at the university nobody was going to remind me. I was on my own. If I missed a lecture or something like that, my pride wouldn't allow me to ask for help from an Anglo, and I didn't see another brown face. So I screwed myself up from the beginning.

When I came back in '64, it was better. By then I had gotten over a lot of my cultural hangups. The Air Force helped me to mature and to recognize my abilities. Most important of all, it helped me to fit into American society. I ended up in an intelligence squadron where most of the guys were college graduates. I was one of the few who didn't have a college degree. And they turned me on to the idea that it was possible for me to go to college. I gained some confidence. I could do the job as well as they, so I knew I could make it in college, whereas before I wasn't sure. I came back with the idea that I was going to make it. The major difference was that before, my mother had signed me up to be an engineer. When I did it on my own, I knew I wanted to be a teacher, so I majored in education. I was more motivated to be a teacher than an engineer.

I was here [as an undergraduate] from '64 to '67. The Greek system was still big, [but] I was a typical commuter student. I had a wife and two kids, so my motivation was to get a degree to get a job to support my family. And the sooner I got that done, the better. I really didn't have



time to spend on campus, and a lot of it was my ignorance in not knowing what went on. It would have made me a better, well-rounded person if I had participated in activities. But the typical commuter [attitude is]: Get off the campus, go to your job, go home, study, go back to school.

I remember specifically that freshmen were required to do two things: paint the "M" and wear an orange-and-white beanie. I guess I was one of those that helped to end traditions like that, because I refused to paint the "M" and wear a beanie. When this upperclassman threatened to do something, I said, "What are you going to do?" And he couldn't think of an answer. So I imagine that guys like me who were coming back from the service, who were more mature than somebody just coming out of high school, helped to destroy what I now consider good traditions.

I have a Bachelor of Science [degree] in Secondary Education, with teaching fields in biology and history. For four years I was a history teacher at Ysleta High School. Public schools provide horrible counseling. The high school counselors are paid to shuffle paper. And a lot of these students would come in and tell me horror stories when they needed counseling. "I'm pregnant: what do I do?" "My mother beats me up." "My father molests me." I didn't know how to deal with that; I had no training. I'm sure of my common sense about such things, but I wasn't a counselor.

So I decided that I would kill two birds with one stone. I could go get my graduate degree in counseling, and I would be able to help these students, and at the same time [I could] draw on the GI Bill rather than work part-time. I went to night school [for] my graduate [work] and was never on campus during the day. Interestingly enough, I never got a chance to go back and counsel those high school kids, because as I was doing my last course, my practicum supervisor [told me] the vice president for student affairs was looking for bilingual counselors. Based on [an] interview, I got the job. In the mornings I was a bilingual counselor, and in the afternoons I was an administrative "go-for."

I didn't ask for the job; I fell right into it. I like to think that it was because of my brown skin that I got the job but because of my abilities, regardless of skin, that I kept it. When I came to work, we were probably 20 percent Hispanic. The black population was basically the same as it is now, not many. You've got to remember that from 1971 to now, the enrollment doubled. In those days it was seven or eight thousand students; now it's fifteen [thousand]. A lot of that growth was Hispanics.



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In fact, the growth in the last ten years has been in Hispanics, has been in women, and the decline has been in male Anglos. The Anglo population stood still, and the Hispanic population grew.

I got in on the best part of the Chicano movement. I was brand new on campus. I thought of myself as the messiah that was going to bridge the gap in communication, because I knew Anglo society and could exist in it, and I knew the Chicano problems and concerns. Most of the students didn't support the Chicano movement; they just went along with it. In fact, taking over the Administration Building in 1971 was accomplished by about twenty students, period. All the rest joined in [as] merely a reaction against the police, not in support of the movement. As far as the staff, they stayed out of it. The faculty — there were some who got into it, basically because of ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] support [for] the movement at that time, but it was a small group. As far as my participation in it, I was the only Chicano who stood against the activists. And I stood against them not because I disagreed with them, but because I didn't like their tactics. I feel that violence is always the last resort.

It was my belief at the time that [the Chicano activists] weren't trying to communicate. In 1971 they posed five or six demands. Now one of the demands was illegal according to state law, so there was no way the University would comply. The second demand had already [been met]. The administration gave in on the others. I thought that was a great victory. The vice president for student affairs, whose title is now dean of students, went over there to tell them in writing, "Okay, you've won. We're giving in on these three. We can't give you this one, and this one you already have." He went to the Administration Building, because they had occupied it. Just as he started to give it to them, they tore the stack of papers out of his hands, tore them up, and threw them up in the air. Then they wouldn't leave the building. So what else could they do? They called the police, and it got to be a big mess.

Later on I spoke to one of the leaders, and I said, "Why did you do this, when you had won?" He said, "You don't understand, stupid. We didn't want to win. We wanted the issue; we wanted the publicity." At that point they became my enemies. If you can settle problems through communication in a nice way, I'm all for it, but I won't deal with people who are out to do violence. It hurt me as a Chicano to have to take a



stand against Chicanos. But now we think alike. Now they know that the way to get things is through legalities, through MALDEF [Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund], through communication, by getting people inside the system and changing it from within, rather than trying to attack it from without.

Here at UTEP activism began to subside about 1975, because the popularity of demonstrations went down. It was replaced by the stupidity of streaking, which lasted a week or so. Those times also brought the new generation dean. They got rid of the father-in-absence, mother-in-absence deans, the nice people who wanted to talk. And they brought in people like me, people who are half lawyers, half politicians, half police.

You've got to be a glutton for punishment, you've got to be slightly insane, to want to be a dean of students. There are three really horrible jobs on the campus: One is being the president of the University, the second one is being the athletic director, and third one is being the dean of students. If I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't have accepted the job. My life has been threatened more times than I like to mention. It's taken its toll on me. As staff, we don't have tenure. You screw up once big, and that's it, you're gone. I was kidding around once, and I told Dr. [Arleigh B.] Templeton\* I wanted tenure. And Dr. Templeton, who was president before Dr. [Haskell] Monroe\*, said, "Joe, the only tenure you have is ten seconds to get the hell off my campus when I tell you to get off." He and I used to talk like that. I really loved the man.

As a student and as a dean, I've been associated with UTEP for twenty years, and more and more I feel it truly represents a bilingual, bicultural community that reflects El Paso. I think that's healthy, because we do serve El Paso. In my opinion, UTEP, in enrolling Hispanics and getting them degrees and professional jobs, has done more for the social and economic advancement of Chicanos than any other thing in El Paso.

I have nothing against high standards. I think UTEP has high standards; I think it should have high standards. But I think those high standards should be in the classroom. What I am against is high standards in the admissions process, because I call that elitism, which denies people an opportunity to try. I think it's a racist notion to keep out people with the admissions process. They may not be aware of it but, realistically, higher standards in admissions, high entrance exam scores, will systematically weed out Chicanos from going to universities, and universities

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are the one thing that we need to advance ourselves. I think anybody — not just Chicanos, but anybody — should have a right to be admitted, and then put them through hell in the classroom. And if they don't make it, flunk 'em out. I guarantee you there'll be some who make it. Those are the ones that should get that opportunity to try.

I love that student body. Nobody knows the students better than I do. I mean, I was one of them; I grew up with them; I taught them in the public schools; I've cried with them; I've gotten drunk with them. I know them. They're El Paso for the most part, and I know El Paso.

Interviewed by Kenneth A. LaPrade, November 28, 1984, El Paso.



*They sent me a letter telling me that I should live in the dorm so I could get the experience of being away from home. They sent the letter to Vietnam!*

## Dennis Bixler-Marquez

Student, 1968-1973

Faculty, 1978-Present

I was born in Mexico City in 1945. My father was American; my mother was Mexican, from Torreon. In 1959 I came to the United States. I started school in a special English program at Father Yermo School and then transferred to a regular program. I went to El Paso Technical, a vocational high school. I was very attracted to automobiles, so I took body repair. Instead of playing sports, I spent most of my time working on cars. When I graduated from high school I worked in the automotive parts business for about a year and a half. Then I was drafted.

I spent all of 1966 and 1967 in the army. I volunteered for service in Vietnam just to see what it was like. Then I got tired of Vietnam, and I told them I wanted to go back to the States, and they said, "Too bad!" So I stayed eight months in Vietnam. I was assigned to an infantry unit as a mechanic. When I was discharged from the army, I decided to attend UTEP. They sent me a letter telling me that I should live in the dorm so I could get the experience of being away from home. They sent the letter to Vietnam!

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I started attending UTEP in the spring of 1968. I completed a Bachelor of Arts in political science and Spanish in 1971. I just crossed the street from the Liberal Arts [Building] and enrolled in a special master's program in education. I worked when I was in college. Even though I had the GI Bill, I had a part-time job, again as an auto mechanic. When I first came, there were a lot of people who had gone into the service and were using the GI Bill to come back, so the University grew by leaps and bounds. Given the percentage of Mexican-Americans that are veterans, you could see a tremendous increase [in] them coming into school. Most of the male students from my high school finished college after having gone through the service. Few of [us] came straight through after high school.

There was a definite shift in the composition of the University because of the Vietnam War. Certainly the University was polarized like the rest of the nation, in terms of the groups for and against the war. I often compare what I went through with what colleagues of mine went through at Berkeley, where they were highly politicized. [Their experience] reflects very strongly in what and how they teach. Because I came back as a veteran, perhaps with more conservative values, it took me quite a while to accept the movements.

[At UTEP there was] nothing approaching the magnitude of a San Francisco State or Columbia or Berkeley, but you [did] have the ethnic renaissance movement growing tremendously. This was also in the midst of the civil rights movement. The black group was very vocal and active, and so was the Mexican-American group. And we had the beginnings of the feminist movement on campus, which had been very late in blossoming here. While most other institutions established ethnic studies programs in that period of time, Women's Studies was instituted here [in the early 1980s], so that gives you an idea. Certainly there were feminists around, but they didn't have the following in this conservative university, as opposed to West Coast universities.

I was involved with MAPA, the Mexican-American Political Association. I was also involved with other groups, such as the Society for the Advancement of Education, where we were trying to bring about change through educational means. We were identifying kids in high school who wanted to go to college, and we would give them the SAT sample test early. We were hoping to attract these people into college preparatory



courses so they could succeed. At the same time, through MAPA I was involved in things like voter registration drives. And at the very first year of my graduate program, we had MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán] taking over the Administration Building.

MEChA operated under the concept of the University belonging to the people of the city. If you are a potential college student or an adult and you are not necessarily enrolled in UTEP, that would not preclude you from being in MEChA. What you have to understand is that MEChA and other organizations were also redefining whether bona fide university organizations should be exclusively made up of students or should be broadly based in the community, which was something not palatable to the administration.

What was wanted at the time were changes in the curriculum of the University to reflect the ethnic composition of the area, [especially] the establishment of a Chicano Studies major, just like you have Black Studies or Urban Studies in other universities. Though MEChA took the initiative and certainly paid the price — some members were incarcerated — what the Chicano movement was trying to bring about was the legitimization of our cultural values and traditions by mainstreaming that into the body of knowledge that we transmit. And naturally when you're talking about that, you're rocking the educational establishment.

Along with that, MEChA and other organizations were saying, "We're not servicing students who are linguistically different." One of the things that MEChA brought about which had not been done, and they wanted it not just for Mexican-Americans but for every other group that needed it, was a tutorial center. They wrote up a proposal and obtained some monies to provide things like remedial English, mathematics, [and] tutors. This is something the University had not acted upon, even though most major universities had such programs in operation. The University eventually took over the program, and [now it] is a very important academic service that's provided to all students who need it, regardless of ethnic background.

You can see the changes in many things, for example, the type of music that's in the jukebox. One of the things that MEChA and other organizations said, "Well, we should have [the same] right to decide what kind of records are going to be in the jukebox." Now everybody takes it for granted. Also, the type of food that's served [was an issue]. Now you have



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Roman numeral one that says "American Food," and under that you have Swedish meatballs and spaghetti and all the other ethnic foods that are not big enough to merit their own Roman numerals because there are not enough Swedes at UTEP. And then there's this whole other area that says "Mexican Food." You have a great deal of crossover. So the average non-Hispanic at UTEP is very much exposed to various aspects of Hispanic culture, whether it be food, music, or cultural entertainment.

You always tend to remember some of the very good teachers you had. Still teaching here in the Mathematics Department is Jesus Provencio, who went out of his way to develop courses and special seminars for people who had difficulties in mathematics, especially if you had difficulties with the language. He was the advisor of the Society for the Advancement of Education that I was affiliated with, so I got to know him well, and I still very much appreciate his commitment to students. I took a course called "The Education of the Mexican-American" under a very good friend and colleague of mine, Dr. Marie Barker, and that eventually influenced me to go into the field of bilingual education, which was a novelty. And then at the master's level, I had Dr. Tomas Arciniega, who is now the president of Cal State-Bakersfield. He was very influential, [as were] several of the faculty here in the Department of Education.

I went through a very innovative two-year master's program [at UTEP]. We were required to work twenty hours a week in the community. We ran into some [problems with] the school system. We had confrontations over curriculum and so forth, and those had a tremendous impact in the views I developed toward what education should be and who should control it. When I went to Stanford, I was able to get a job over people who had been there a year or two because of the credentials that I acquired in the program at UTEP. So the experiences I had at UTEP very much contributed to my success later on in my doctoral program and also in securing employment, so I could afford to be in a doctoral program.

The University has always been a socioeconomic escalator, but it's become more accessible to a broader percentage of the population, especially people who, because of their sex or ethnic or socioeconomic background, had been tracked away [from] that social escalator almost from the first day they hit the public schools. It's not such an elitist concept anymore. Unfortunately there is a [backlash] at the present to move toward



some type of elitist [policy]. But I think that it will never go back to the way it was when it was very much the exclusive domain of the middle class.

That is the thing that impresses me the most, because it means that the University is responding. Perhaps not at the rate which everyone desires, but nevertheless [UTEP] has made some changes to meet some of the needs of the community. The composition of the student body has changed. It's not that anyone has been supplanted. It's not [that] one group came at the expense of another, but rather that we [have added] to the diversity of the school. And that to me was something very healthy and very desirable, because this represents precisely some of the things we were working for in the late sixties and early seventies. When you see them closer to realization fourteen years later, you do get a [strong sense] of satisfaction. You don't feel that it was all done in vain.

Interviewed by Randy Scott Hedrick, November 27, 1984, El Paso.

*Everyone was streaking. . . . I remember a very old man riding on top of a car going through the main campus, and on his briefcase, which was shielding his important parts, was a bumper sticker that said "I'm proud to be a grandpa."*

## Thomas F. Meagher

Student, 1972-1977, 1981-1985

I grew up in Las Cruces and moved to the big city, El Paso, upon graduation from Las Cruces High School in 1972. [Before making a decision] I went for an interview at UNM [the University of New Mexico]. I also went to Tucson or Phoenix. The people there were extremely rude when you asked for the catalog and asked about their program. When I came down to UTEP, it was like — "Please come here." I got so much literature and so much help. It was only forty miles away, so I thought, "You can't pass it up."

At the time we were experiencing a nursing shortage in the country. The tuition for nurses [at UTEP] was fifty dollars a semester. You could get your college education for fifty dollars a semester. That was really great. The other attraction was the band. I got called by the person who was running the band at the time, and he said, "Would you like to come on a scholarship?" I said, "Well, I'm a nursing major." He said, "That's all right. You have to do your first two years [on the main campus]. We'll give you a band scholarship to come on down and play in the band."



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I played the tuba. It's worth money to someone to have you carry it around. I said, "Sure, you bet!" So I came down and went on a scholarship at UTEP for the first two years, playing the tuba and doing my prenursing courses.

[I got interested in nursing after] a personal situation where I came across an individual who needed a lot of medical assistance. She was having a seizure. No one, including me, knew what to do for this person. I really got the urge at that time, [which] was my last year of high school, that I didn't want to be in such a situation ever again, when I didn't know what to do for someone who needed help. I decided at that time to start looking into nursing schools. My parents didn't think much of it. My parents wanted you to go into a "manly" profession or go into the army. They thought it was strange that I wanted to be a nurse. But they learned to accept it. Now they're very glad they did.

So I started UTEP in September of 1972. It was the first semester that the dorms went coed. It was just prior to them authorizing you to have alcohol in the dorms. So a lot of time and energy was spent on how to get it in and out. [It was] a lot of fun. I remember a keg party we had in the dorm room one weekend. We snuck the keg up, snuck the ice in, and had a keg party in the dorm room. It was [daring], because if you got caught you'd be out of Kelly Hall real quick.

I remember the football team; it wasn't very good at the time. I remember the fans singing "Bye, Bye, Bobby" in the stands, because Bobby Dobbs was the coach at that time. [The band] went on trips to play [at] football games. In fact, I met my wife on one of those trips to Tucson. The band now is much more formal. The band then was a rowdy group. I remember we used to dance in the stands and carry on. We used to do picture shows and theme marching shows. We'd go from one picture on the field, which might be a Mexican hat, to another picture, which might be a pair of castanets. It seemed to be "helter skelter" between one picture and another. Organized confusion might be a better way of describing it. It was just a lot of fun. It got me through my first years in college.

Of the forty-three who graduated [in my nursing class], there were only three males. [Male enrollment hasn't] ranged any higher than 10 percent of the program. And that's true in the profession today; it's a 95 percent female profession. We weren't treated any differently as far as



I could see. [I was] just another student in the class who was working hard. It was a difficult program to get through. [There was] a lot of studying, a lot of clinical time, just a lot of work. They didn't recommend that you have a part-time job while going to school, because it could jeopardize your success. It didn't stop me, though. I had two part-time jobs and got married and had a kid, all [while] I was going through nursing school.

Hotel Dieu [Hospital] used to have a three-year diploma program, [which] was run by the Daughters of Charity. It was the Hotel Dieu School of Nursing, a very respected school throughout the country. The sisters ran it. Then the sisters sold the school to The University of Texas System. It became part of the [U.T.] System School of Nursing. There were many campuses of the system school at that time. Then about 1976 the System School of Nursing dissolved into regional campuses. What was then the system school [in El Paso] became The University of Texas at El Paso College of Nursing. A few years ago [in 1980] it became the College of Nursing and Allied Health.

We spent a lot of time in the library, which was then located [downtown] at the College of Nursing. [It] saved you a lot of work but made it really parochial, in that nursing students were down at the college and distant from the UTEP main campus. Now the college [library is] in the main University Library, so all the students have to go up there and are more integrated into [UTEP].

There was a lot of clinical time in various hospitals. [At the college] there's a "Sim" [simulation] lab which has been nationally recognized as one of the best equipped Sim labs for nursing instruction in the country. They have mannequins and a mock hospital setup where you practice your clinical skills. Eileen Jacoby was the dean of the college at that time. She was and is a worldwide nursing leader. The one classic instructor at the college was a lady named [Dorothy] Dee Corona, an excellent nurse and smart educator. Spend one class with her, and you've got a role model for nursing. She was excellent.

During the period when the system was transitioning over to UTEP, there was a lot of fear over whether nursing education would go back [to giving] doctors control. There were marches around the school with placards that said "Save our School!" A delegation went to Austin to fight the dissolving of the system. They [feared] that by being decentralized they would lose the power of a [state-wide] system.



Back in 1971-72 there were the so-called "riots" at UTEP. I don't think anybody who was actually on campus thought they were really riots. There were people who were out there talking about "Viva La Raza" and that kind of thing, but they were mostly very peaceful people who were trying to voice their feelings. However, there were [people] on the roofs snapping pictures, and everyone would come out of the SUB [Student Union Building] and watch, which added to the masses of the people and to the anxiety of the administration. No one was really doing anything except watch a bunch of people speak, but there was a big concern. It was funny to watch the nightly news at the time and hear about the "riots" at UTEP. You'd say, "What riot? Was I there today?" There really wasn't [a riot], but that's what they were talking about.

In '73 or '74 we had a rash of streaking. Everyone was streaking. We had a guy who streaked the band hall. Also I think there was somebody who streaked the Sun Bowl that year, from one end to the other. I remember a very old man riding on top of a car going through the main campus, and on his briefcase, which was shielding his important parts, was a bumper sticker that said "I'm proud to be a grandpa." He was riding down University Avenue on top of the car, right in front of the Liberal Arts Building. I think all the students saw it in perspective, as a big joke, as something that's part of college life — "Hey, what's the big deal?" It was something to laugh at and have fun with. But of course the administration had to assume a more authoritarian role. I believe they were threatening to throw people out of school if they got caught streaking. I don't think they needed to throw them out; the embarrassment alone of being caught [should be sufficient punishment]. But it was all in good fun.

I graduated in '77 and went back in '81 to work on my master's. I got that in '85. Now I'm an assistant administrator here at Thomason [Hospital], and I teach at the graduate level in the College of Nursing. I've spent my whole nursing career in El Paso. Whether it's critical care or pediatrics or geriatrics, when everybody else is gone, when the doctor's at home, it's the nurse who's at the bedside. From birth to death and from wellness to illness, it's the nurse who's the true primary care giver. It's fun to be the angel with the lamp, even as a male.

Interviewed by Charles H. Martin, September 25, 1989, El Paso.

*When I got elected there actually was a Prospector reporter who said, "Do you think you're going to be able to keep order in council, being a woman?" I told him, "Well, . . . I can bang that gavel as loud as anybody."*

## Luz Villegas

Student, 1977-82

I was born in Chicago and lived there until I was nine years old. My father came from Mexico, and he had a job working with a carpet factory. On a visit to El Paso he met my mother. They got married and went back to Chicago. We came back here for health reasons. My brother had asthma, and back then doctors recommended a move to a warm climate. Since my mother was originally from El Paso, we came here.

I went to school at Jefferson High School, which is down on Alameda Street. My two main activities were journalism — I was on the yearbook staff — and debate. My brother and I, who are twins, were a debate team. Neither of my parents had [much] formal education. I was the first one in my family to receive a [college] degree, but if it wasn't for a very concerned sociology teacher in high school, [I might not have gone]. He did his part to try to get a lot of the Hispanic students at Jefferson High School to go to college.

I remember he showed up one day in class [with] a stack of UTEP applications. He came up to me and said, "You've got the grades; you're going



to college." He handed me an application and said, "Fill this out and send it in." It's almost embarrassing for me to admit it, but that's how I ended up in college. I really didn't have any plans to go, despite the fact that I had done well in high school. When you come from a family [where no one] has had any kind of college education, and you grow up in an area — South El Paso — where not very many people have a college education, [you don't think about going to college]. I wish I knew where he was now. I'm very grateful to him.

I graduated in 1977 and started at UTEP in the fall. It was a big change. You have to remember I went to Jefferson High School, which is probably 98 percent Hispanic. Having grown up in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, coming to UTEP was actually a cultural shock for me. I was very concerned about doing well in college. My first year at UTEP was really very quiet, and I spent many, many hours in the library. It wasn't until my sophomore year that I started to get involved in other things; that's when my brother and I joined the debate team. That took up quite a bit of our time. We enjoyed it, because our tournaments were in other cities, mostly in the Southwest. Back then [our coach] was Professor [William D.] Elkins. Dr. Roy Gentry was the assistant coach.

One of our fellow debaters, Victor Castillo, was forming a ticket to run for the student council. This just happened to be a mostly Chicano ticket. A lot of the members of the ticket were [from] the MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán] organization. It was by chance that I ended up on their ticket, [since] at the end he realized that he had no women on the ticket. I was a fellow debater, and he just happened to ask whether I might be interested in running for student council, because he needed a girl's name on his ticket.

I was elected to the student council for the following year, which would have been my junior year. Eddie Forkerway, a football player, was president. The following year we formed a ticket, the ACTION ticket, where Luis Patino was the presidential [candidate], and I was running for internal affairs vice president. We had a very big campaign. We had posters; we had campaign photos. *The Prospector* went as far as putting out a special campaign issue that dealt with nothing but the candidates. We were very successful in that three of our four officer candidates got into office.

I remember that when I got elected there actually was a *Prospector* reporter who said, "Do you think you're going to be able to keep order in council, being a woman?" I told him, "Well, I'm very familiar with parliamentary procedures, and I can bang that gavel as loud as anybody." The very first year that I ran for student council, the ticket was primarily a MEChA ticket. If I'm not mistaken that was the last time we ever saw a purely Chicano ticket involved in student government [elections]. There were a good portion of sorority and fraternity students on the tickets [in subsequent years], but they weren't composed completely of them. We knew that if we could get a diverse ticket it would be easier to get into office. If we got an engineering student on our ticket, he'd be pushing [our group] at the Engineering Building. The liberal arts people would be pushing in the Liberal Arts Building. That was the way to get elected. Most of the tickets were very diverse; it was a marketing strategy.

That year [interest in student government] was big, because that's the time that we had the controversy over the budget cuts that Reagan was implementing, which were going to affect our financial aid. Simultaneously on the state level we were also facing increases in tuition. We saw the financial aid cuts as affecting our student body very significantly, because [a high percentage] of our student body at that time was receiving some sort of financial aid. We fought the tuition increases as hard as we could.

At the end of the year, May of '81, I was graduating and had not quite decided what I was going to do. Having an interest in public administration and law, I decided to hang around an extra year and take some additional classes [and run for student council president]. I believe I was the first [female] internal affairs vice president. People were aware that if I were elected I would be the first female student body president, and it was certainly covered by *The Prospector*. But it never became an issue as far as campaigning. I got elected SA president, and I started in June, 1981. One of my personal goals was to unify the student association again. That was one of the things that I did manage to accomplish; I felt very good about that.

We concentrated a lot on trying to provide services on campus. The File-a-Book program [was one of our accomplishments]. It had been in existence for a long time, but we finally got a full-time person to work all day long. File-a-Book is a program whereby students can take their



used books, put them on file at the office, and other students could purchase that book. It was a good alternative to buying books, regardless of whether they were used or new, at the book store. They could usually buy a used book at File-a-Book at an even lower price than they could at the book store. We had a Share-a-Ride program, and this year was the first time that we had a computerized program. During registration we had a table available where the students could fill out information as to when they arrived on campus and when they left. Then we were feeding this into a computer and trying to match them with other students. We had this before, but this was the first year we had computerized it.

The fall semester of 1981 we increased the library hours, because we had heard [complaints] about how you couldn't even study [there] during finals. President [Haskell] Monroe\* was supportive; the library staff was supportive; everyone was very supportive. We increased the hours, [which] took effect the week before finals and continued through the [end] of finals. Focusing on our goal of helping commuter students, we decided to sponsor a car maintenance workshop. It was held at Ysleta Vocational High School [and] was free. Everything that we did was free to students, since it was student money that we were using to fund these little activities. We put together an apartment referral [guide]. This was aimed at our older student population, students who were married and no longer living at home. All of these were firsts.

Dr. Monroe came from Texas A&M [University]. We spent the first year that he was here explaining what the student body was like. We are a commuter campus, whereas a significant portion of A&M students live on campus. They were very rich in tradition, whereas we lacked some of that tradition. When Dr. Monroe came, he wanted that tradition, that pride [at UTEP]. He was the one who started the tradition of convocations here at UTEP. We had an ice cream social before the convocation, trying to get [students] to attend. That was also about the time we changed the school colors. Dr. Monroe had set up a special committee to look into changing the colors. I was on the committee. Before they had been orange and white. We added the blue, so that the official colors became Miner orange, Columbia blue, [and white].

One of the controversies that we had with the administration that year was [over scholarships]. The administration decided that students receiving academic scholarships had to complete thirty hours within their first [two]

semesters. That was a very big controversy; the entire student association was against it. We said, "We see nothing wrong with giving them a full calendar year," which would mean they would be able to use the summer sessions to fulfill that thirty-hour requirement their first year. We fought that very hard, and the administration won out. We didn't forget that loss.

Towards the end of the year, we had a very unfortunate incident. Phil Holt was a nontraditional student. After high school he had served time in the military, and then he had come back to school. He was a senior engineering student [with] high grades, the ideal student, and he got killed on his way to an engineering convention in an automobile accident. We decided to set up a scholarship in Phil's name. The [main] requirement was that [the recipient] be a nontraditional student, one who after graduating from high school had been out of academics for at least a year. The other requirement was that he fulfill thirty hours in one *calendar* year. That was our little contribution to helping the nontraditional student.

Student demonstrations [were rare]. The one that comes to mind was the Iranian one. The Iranian students' group decided to have a demonstration out at the Student Union courtyard. The veterans' group, which was Chi Gamma Iota, had gotten wind of that, and they didn't like it. They thought [it] was somewhat un-American. You have to recall the Iranian students' position at that time. Their funds had been frozen. They couldn't pay for their tuition; they couldn't pay for their housing; they couldn't pay for anything. The university took special measures to provide for them because of that. But they decided to have their demonstration outside the Union.

I was there just as an observer. There were a few people yelling things at the Iranian students, and it just got worse and worse. When the demonstration ended, people started running after them. They dropped everything and started running for their lives. They ran around the Student Union Building to one of the staff entrances to the cafeteria. They kept going from door to door, and that was the first door that they found open. We got the police out there, [but] the students wouldn't leave. They were angry at those Iranian students. After a while it finally calmed down. As far as actual demonstrations, that was the only [one] that I can think of during the time that I was here. Things had calmed down a lot. We caught the tail end of [streaking]. I think it might have been my freshman



year when I saw a streaker. We were having one of the Homecoming parades, and there was a streaker running through it. That's the [only one] I remember.

I have very fond memories of UTEP. They [include] the pride that I felt winning those debate trophies and bringing them back to UTEP. That was a good feeling, because I remember going to debate tournaments where people would say, "What's a UTEP?" [I'm proud of] the university having such a unique student body, being a bicultural and a commuter campus. You meet a lot of interesting people here. It is very different from a lot of universities. It's not going to be like your A&Ms or your Texas Techs. It's very, very unique.

Interviewed by Charles H. Martin, October 22, 1989, El Paso.

*Every year that I was here we won the [NCAA] team championship. . . . UTEP was the school to be reckoned with.*

## Milton Ottey

Student, 1980-1985, 1989-1990

I was born in Jamaica and moved to Toronto, Canada, when I was ten years old. I attended several high schools and graduated in 1979. I've been told that I could have been an athlete [in any sport] I wanted, whether football, basketball, or volleyball, or whatever in track and field. Since I excelled in the high jump, I kept with it. I sent letters off to various universities in the fall of '78. One went off to [the University of] California, Berkeley. John Wedell, who was the assistant coach there, got in touch with me. I chose not to take a scholarship that year [because] I wanted to train for the 1980 Olympics. Unfortunately, [Canada] boycotted. I got back to Wedell and found out that he had moved to El Paso. He quickly got back in touch with me and brought me down for a visit.

The only time I'd ever heard of El Paso was in the westerns. When the plane landed, I couldn't see the city [through the window]. All I saw was desert and tumbleweeds. My image was, "This is in the desert!" After the plane turned around, I started breathing a little easier when I saw the city. It was a bit scary, because you're talking to someone who's used to green: green trees, green grass. It was a big difference. I liked the campus, and I liked the architecture. I think I adapted well to El Paso.



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I enjoyed Mexican [food]. I like hot spicy things; that's a Caribbean part of me. Other than the fact that I missed home, I didn't really find El Paso all that bad, although it was boring unless you had a car.

I arrived here in the fall of 1980. I came here because I wanted to be the best. I saw the plaques, the trophies, and the people that were here. There was no doubt in my mind that if I came here I would be the best. I had a good coach [in] John Wedell, who taught me a lot. The first year I took second in the NCAA indoor track and field [championships] and second outdoors. The fall of the second year, I improved tremendously. I won at the end of 1982 about twenty-six straight [meets] and received the number one ranking in the world. The following year in February I broke my leg. That curtailed things. Fortunately for me, less than four or five months afterwards, I was back in stiff competition. I placed ninth at the world championship in Helsinki in August of 1983.

When I came to UTEP, Ted Banks\* was the head coach, John Wedell was the assistant, and Collin Thurton was a graduate assistant. John took care of my program. On the other hand, Ted was more concerned with the distance runners. But as head coach, he made the decisions. Ted liked to go foreign because it was a field that was untapped. For instance, we had the Tanzanian connection. Apparently [children] there run from their houses to school, so it's a natural process. El Paso is very much like Tanzania, from what I hear. UTEP was the foreign pipeline.

Now the ironic thing about the whole situation was that schools that were against UTEP, UCLA for instance, when they were tops, they won with numerous foreign athletes also. But because they weren't winning, all of the sudden they became xenophobes. We looked at that as being sour grapes. Ted would get T-shirts made up every time we won a championship. As soon as it was announced that we'd won the title, we'd all put on these T-shirts. It would say, "U.T. El Paso — NCAA Champions" for that year, and on the back it would say, "Don't be a Xenophobe." As I saw it, we're all athletes once you put the shoes on.

I held many track records: UTEP records, Canadian records, Commonwealth records, the NCAA record. But as for my own personal goals, I don't try to set any. I just try to jump as high as I can. At the Olympic Games [in 1984] in Los Angeles, I placed sixth, representing Canada. My best year afterwards was 1986. That year I won the unofficial world high jump championships. I won the Canadian Championships, and in



July I jumped 7'7 3/4", which is my career best. I went on to win the Commonwealth Games. The Commonwealth Games are for the ex-British Colonies and have been around for years. I won in 1982; I won in 1986. [The 1982 Games] were held in Brisbane, Australia. Bert Cameron, myself, Suleiman Nyambui, and all the Africans [from UTEP] were there. If we had totaled the amount of medals that were won by UTEP athletes, we would have won the Games [as a team], on the medal count.

Bert Cameron and I are very good friends. We understand each other, because we are from the same island [Jamaica]. And that to me was a plus for UTEP, because I had somebody I could relate to. Bert is a wild guy. He's like a kid, but he could run like a horse. Bert was very, very successful. He won several NCAA [championships] while at UTEP. [He was] number one in the world in 1982. In 1983, world champion, and 1984 would have been his greatest year. He was the favorite for the gold medal [in the Olympics]. But about 100 meters into the [qualifying] race, he grabbed his hamstring and came to a complete stop. Everybody else was at least fifty yards ahead of him. He got back running and ran so hard to qualify. In a 400 you don't come to a dead stop and then do that. But he qualified. Unfortunately, he hurt his hamstring so badly that he could not even walk the next day [and missed the finals]. I really felt it for Bert, because I knew he had the gold medal.

[Suleiman] Nyambui is a man I respect a great deal. He has many titles, [including] a silver medal in the '80 Olympics. He was down to earth and was still living in the dorms. He spoke to everybody, although half the time you couldn't understand what he was saying. He's a joy to be with. It was a great asset for me to have Nyambui. I still respect him; I wish the man could run forever. Nyambui is a great person away from the track. He helped [many of] his fellow countrymen to better themselves.

UTEP had a unique opportunity. You had so many people in one [location]: the Mexicans, the Canadians, the Caribbeans, the Africans. You see that there is a difference and that your own perspective on things is not necessarily the [only] way. So you learn about different cultures. I've seen these guys, the Africans, cook things. You taste the [food], and it's good. So it opens up your mind to different cultures, to different things.

Every year that I was here we won an [NCAA] team championship. Pontiac, Michigan, 1981, we won it indoors. Outdoors we won it in Baton Rouge. In '82 we won [outdoors] in Provo, Utah, hands down. UTEP



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was the school to be reckoned with. Once we walked on the turf with our uniforms on, everybody knew who we were. There was a sense of pride with this team. The pride of the team was so great you didn't want to let the team down. You wanted to do your job to the best of your ability, because all we had then was ourselves. We did not feel any support from the University [or] the community. I think they got so used to us winning that they took it for granted.

This might sound a bit bitter, because I did feel bitterness at the time. The basketball team won one championship in 1966, and that's all we heard about. "Texas Western 1966 Champion." Here we are; we've won triple crowns; we won mega NCAA championships. Nobody wanted to say, "Hey, way to go." One thing stood out. We went back to Pontiac, Michigan, in [March], 1982, indoors, and we came back with the NCAA championship. And that's the same year that the Miner basketball team did not get invited to [the NCAA Tournament or] the NIT. And there was such a big ruckus about it that the community threw them a parade down Mesa [Street]. And here we are coming in that evening with an NCAA [championship] trophy, and what we're hearing about is a parade that's been thrown for the basketball team because they did not make [a postseason tournament]!

Many people say you can do both [sports and academics, but] it is a hard job. I was an elite athlete. Many of the athletes here were [among the] elite. I'd be on the track from two o'clock until six-thirty working. Then I had to go back to the dorms, eat, study, catch a good night's sleep, and then get up and go to class the next morning. When you're traveling, you leave here Friday. If you have a doubleheader, which can range from Los Angeles to New York to El Paso, [you still] have to get up for class Monday morning. It takes its toll.

Track became my number one focus. I should have concentrated on the classes that I was taking to insure that I graduated. A lot of the kids out there think that just because you're an athlete on scholarship you get special privileges. What they don't understand is that the classes I missed, I had to get the notes for them. I had to make up the test that I missed. So my job is twice as hard. It's two full-time jobs carried out at the same time. It can be done, but sacrifices have to be made. You've got to know what you want.

Now we have a good coach here, a good staff, and we have an interest in building the program and in doing the best job we possibly can with the athletes we have. I think right now we have a very good team. Most of them are here from El Paso, and they're very talented kids, and they all want to work hard. I feel they know that the coaches are now interested in [them as] a person as well as an athlete and a student. That's the image we're trying to project, because we want them to graduate. I personally don't want anyone to be like me. I wish I had finished my education years ago, but unfortunately track had taken a presence in my life where I could make a living out of it. I got to see half of the world without paying for it. Not everybody is capable of doing that. If you can, all the more power to you, but please I hope everybody gets their education.

Interviewed by Charles H. Martin, October 3, 1989, El Paso.



*I'm awfully glad they talked me into going, because [receiving the first doctoral degree granted by UTEP] is a milestone that I would not have missed. The feeling was fantastic.*

## Gary Massingill

Student, 1975-1979

My father was a farmer in Snyder, Texas, and had an eighth grade education. In our family there weren't many people that had an educational background beyond high school, so there wasn't a great push to put me into college. I graduated from Snyder High School in 1964. I had fairly good grades, but I didn't have great study habits.

When I got to college I didn't do so well. I started at Howard County Junior College in Big Spring. I partied a bit, which didn't make my father any more impressed with the idea that I should continue to go to school. They asked for a major, and I went ahead and [selected] geology. There was a professor by the name of Thackery. He had worked for Texaco, and he really developed a desire on my part to continue [with geology]. My grades weren't all that good, except for geology and a few other subjects. I almost had to fight my father to continue in school.

I went to West Texas State in Canyon, which is about fifteen miles south of Amarillo. My grades still [weren't] great. I had a desire to go to college, but that was not the only thing on my mind. I graduated with my bachelor's degree in May, 1969. In December I went into officer training

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school in San Antonio. I spent three and a half years in the Air Force and got out at the rank of captain.

When I got out, I decided I wanted to go back to school for two reasons. One is I had the GI Bill, and I felt that was a good opportunity. The second reason was that my undergraduate grades were bad. [I] decided that I would try to improve them, and that's the reason why I elected to go back to the same school — West Texas State — in 1972. I spent three years [there] and graduated in 1975 with my master's degree in geology. I had a [straight A] grade average. In terms of rounding me out as a geologist, I really feel like that those years were good. It was a small enough school that they really gave their students extra attention. It was a very enjoyable time for me.

[In the 1970s] things began to look better for geologists, [since] the energy problem had arisen. I had thought about going on for a [Ph.D.]. I had developed a good relationship with Exxon. The year I graduated [the company] was really pushing me hard to go work for them. [They] said, "We want you. You don't need a doctorate." But I was telling them I did want one. Frank Daugherty, who was a professor at West Texas State, was my mentor. He was also a good friend of mine, and he knew [W.N.] McAnulty\* of The University of Texas at El Paso. One of the better schools in geology was The University of Texas at Austin, but I never really had a great desire to go there. I liked smaller schools. [UTEP had] a new Ph.D. program, and I thought it would be a good place to get more personalized attention. I wanted that, rather than just being one of hundreds. When I found out that Frank [Daugherty] knew McAnulty and highly recommended [him], I said, "I think I'll give this a try."

McAnulty was more or less the old man of the university at that time. He wasn't the director, but he carried a lot of clout. I think McAnulty's name would be right at the front of the list [of people] who were instrumental in getting that [doctoral] program going. I allotted myself a three-year program, [but] for some reason everyone else allotted me more like a four- or five-year program. I pushed real hard, saying, "Let's get this thing done." On the other hand, they would say, "What's your hurry?" There were five doctoral students while I was there. K.C. Evans was [one] of them; she was working in uranium. Michael Shayphest was a paleontologist. There were no foreign students at that time in the doctoral program.



It seemed like they changed the rules on us every once in a while. We'd be going along, and they would have some kind of meeting and say, "Maybe we need to require this instead [of another course]" and end up deciding to change the requirements. All in all, I feel like it was really a gain for me, [because] I got a really strong background. That background is because of all the tough requirements that they laid on us while we were there.

School was just great, in most cases. [The program] was growing. They didn't always know what they really wanted everyone to do; they were still trying to figure out [a new program]. I think McAnulty was able to smooth over some of the problems. We took a written exam for a whole day [after finishing our coursework], and then you ended up with a half-day oral examination on anything and everything they wanted to ask us. There were only two of us taking both tests the first time, myself and K.C. Evans. The field of geology is quite diverse, but they could ask you anything they wanted to. [It] ended up being quite strenuous. But somehow we managed to struggle through it.

I managed to get funding for my dissertation through the New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources in Socorro. As a matter of fact, the university decided that since I was getting my funding there and actually doing a lot of my work there, [I needed] an off-campus advisor. [So they chose] Chuck Chapin at the New Mexico Bureau. Both McAnulty and Chapin reviewed my dissertation. That got to be pretty interesting, because they had different styles of writing. Before it was over with, my [awkward passages] had long since been corrected, so they were [mostly] changing each other's changes. This was pre-word processor days. There was a woman at the bureau that was assigned to me for typing, and she typed the [manuscript] a *number* of times. Finally I went to McAnulty and said, "Something's got to give here." So he relented.

[The dissertation] was about 300 pages long. It was a fairly detailed geologic map and structural interpretation of the earth around Magdalena, New Mexico, which is about forty miles west of Socorro. This was an area that is structurally very interesting. There is a fissure that runs right through the center of New Mexico — the Rio Grande Rift. It's a position where the Continental Plate is being ripped apart and is spreading. It's also on the southeastern [edge] of the Colorado Plateau. It had some uranium, coal, and oil potential, so there was some good mapping that needed to be done there.

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I finished almost everything there was to do with the dissertation before I left the bureau. I took a job in Corpus Christi in January, 1979, but the degree was not conferred until the following semester. I went through the graduation, [but] I would have been willing to skip [it]. I have never been a very ceremonious person; I even missed my high school prom. But [my professors] more or less told me, "You ought to be there." I'm awfully glad they talked me into going, because [receiving the first doctoral degree granted by UTEP] is a milestone that I would not have missed. The feeling was fantastic; it really was.

My father and my mother came. My dad had not been very supportive of me going to school. When I graduated with my master's and started for my doctorate, he asked, "Do you really think you need this? Is this really necessary?" At graduation, he changed totally. Even up until the [degree] was conferred, he was really [skeptical]. But all of a sudden, when he got back home, he was talking about his son the doctor. From that point on, he's never even suggested that I did the wrong thing. So I think that he was quite proud.

Interviewed via telephone by Charles H. Martin, October 30, 1989, El Paso and Reno, Nevada.



*When I first arrived, I wanted to taste the burgers over here. I wanted to compare them with McDonald's and Kentucky [Fried Chicken] in Malaysia.*

## Charles V. Balang

Student, 1987-1990

I grew up in Sarawak, which was formerly called Borneo, in the eastern part of Malaysia. It's around a one-and-a-half-hour airplane flight from there [to the mainland]. The language of my school was English. I was among the last to have English as the language of instruction. After that it [became] Bahasa Malaysia or Malay, which is the national language now.

[In Malaysia] the government usually sends students overseas after they finish high school, but in order to save money they ask some students to study for two years in Malaysia and take the basic courses before they go to the United States. That's why I went to the TIEC [Texas International Education Consortium\*] program in Shah Alam, Kuala Lumpur. I enrolled in January, 1985, in the TOEFL\* program, and I did my TOEFL and SAT [preparation] for six months and then went into the TIEC. I was in the TIEC for three years and then came here.

In Sarawak [the schools] use the British system, where the teacher talks a lot and the student just listens. There are no group discussions. [In] the American style, the professor gets more involved with the students. They ask more questions, and they get involved with students in other kinds of activities. After class in Malaysia, there is usually not much contact

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between the students and the teachers. [At the TIEC] I had classes with three professors from UTEP, Dr. [Carl T.] Jackson, Dr. [Kenton J.] Clymer, and Dr. [H.S.] Oey. When I came over here, I didn't have any more classes with them, because I had finished all my basic courses.

I think it would be better for Malaysian students to be sent straight to the United States, even though it costs more. I think for the students themselves it's much better. Even if they want to make a transition, it doesn't need to take that long. Six months is enough for them to adjust to student life in the United States. When you are in the TIEC, the rigid rules that apply to other universities in Malaysia still apply, even though it is a transition program. The only thing that makes it [different] is that the professors are from the United States. But the rigid rules still apply. You have to wear your hair short; you have to wear a uniform to class; you have to use [socks], this kind of thing.

My major is mechanical engineering. We were given three choices by the Malaysian government before we went overseas. My first choice was quantity survey, because I wanted to go to New Zealand or Australia. My second choice was architecture, because I thought I'd make a lot of money. But I didn't know how to draw. My third choice was mechanical engineering, so they gave me the third choice.

People watch a lot of American television [in Malaysia], so I wanted to see whether the lives that are portrayed on television are true or not. When [told] I was going to go to UTEP, I thought it was a desert and had only one season. At first I was [disappointed], because I wanted to see snow. I came during January, 1987. It was very cold. When I felt the cold, I preferred El Paso [to other places that were even colder].

The first thing that really struck me most was that I thought I would see a lot of Caucasians in El Paso. But after I'd been in El Paso for a few days I saw a lot of Hispanics, who look like Malaysians, so I felt right at home. [People sometimes speak to me in Spanish and mistake me for a Mexican.] When they ask me for directions, I just say, "No comprendo. No hablo español." They are surprised to see a guy who answers back in Spanish but who can't speak Spanish.

When I first arrived, I wanted to taste the burgers over here. I wanted to compare them with McDonald's and Kentucky [Fried Chicken] in Malaysia. I went to a Whataburger, and on the menu they had milkshakes. I wanted to order a Mexican type of flavor. So when the attendant asked,



"What kind of flavor do you want?" I said "chico" several times, and my friend was laughing. At last I really looked carefully at the menu. Then I saw that "chico" means small, so I made a fool of myself there. I miss the open-air food stores [in Malaysia], because over here you eat indoors almost all the time, [except for] picnics. The food here is expensive. There's not as much variety as in Malaysia. Even the Chinese food here, to me it's tasteless. I consider it to be junk food, compared to Chinese food in Malaysia.

The students are more conservative in Malaysia than here [at UTEP]. Students are expected to be respectful to teachers [there]. American students are not as conservative as Malaysian students, because they are allowed more freedom. Malaysia is a Muslim country, so the rules are more rigid. In Malaysia we don't have any kinds of [student] gatherings and big games, like football games. You're not allowed to demonstrate at Malaysian universities. If you do, you get expelled.

[When Malaysian students come to the U.S.], they feel more liberal; they feel more freedom. That's a cultural shock. It's up to them to control their newly-found freedom. When they come here they find out that not everyone is as rich as they portray on the TV. There are Americans who are not middle class; there are people who beg; there are people who don't have homes. That's the thing that surprises them the most.

I found that [UTEP students] are very serious about their classes, especially if they work. If they come back to school, they're very serious about their classes, and they tend to ask more, because they want to feel that they are getting their money's worth. For me, that's what is outstanding about American students. I think history classes are my favorite ones, because for me history teaches people's cultural ways, where they come from, why they act like that, why they have certain kinds of characteristics. So classes taught by both Dr. Jackson [and] Dr. Clymer were very interesting to me.

When you are in Malaysia you are not aware of Mexico. But when I came here, I found that Mexico is interesting. [Right] by the border there's so much difference in standards of living, culture, and language. I found that though Mexicans are poor, they still retain their ethnicity very strongly, just like every other people who emigrate or who are close to a very rich country.

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I go to UTEP football and basketball games. At first football was boring to me, because I'd never seen so many people play for one team. It looked as if 100 people were on the field playing [at one time]. To me it was stupid, but then I found out the beauty of the game. Then I came to appreciate it. Basketball was a new experience to me, because I'd never seen people slam dunk. I don't have time for [many student organizations]. I help the Malaysian Student Association, but most of the time I'm involved with the UTEP Soccer Club, because we are trying to make UTEP soccer into an NCAA [sport] by next year. We're getting better at the moment, because we have beaten almost everybody, even the University of Chihuahua, which is known for its good soccer.

I intend to go back to Malaysia, because I miss my country. I've read in the papers that the economy is recovering and that there are a lot of job openings, so for sure I'll be going back. I will remember [UTEP] for its unique architecture. Most of the buildings are Bhutanese. To me that's very unique. It fits perfectly with the surroundings, with the mountains. I will remember the mix of people, just like in Malaysia. I will remember [UTEP's] proximity to Mexico and the opportunity to be near the border and see different cultures.

Interviewed by Charles H. Martin, October 17, 1989, El Paso.



*I have always set goals for myself. First I wanted to graduate from high school. Then later on I wanted be an engineer. . . . Now I want to be the president of Bell Helicopter!*

## Jose I. Oaxaca

Student, 1982-1986

I was born in Juarez, Mexico, and my parents got divorced when I was six years old. My mother wanted a better life for us. She sold the house we had over there when I was eleven, and she used all the money so we could move over here. The first two years we lived with my grandmother in Ysleta. I had Anglo teachers, so it was hard; I couldn't talk to anybody.

[I completed] the third grade [in Juarez], so when we moved to Ysleta I [should have been placed] in the fourth. [But] they wanted to put me in the third grade because I didn't know any English. I told them, "You put me in the third grade, and I'm not going to go to school." The first day, they had a math contest at my classroom. It was real funny. They would have two lines and two people, and then they would give us a problem, and whoever finished first got a piece of candy. In the third grade over there in Juarez I had [learned] division and a little bit of fractions. Here [in the fourth grade] they [were doing] multiplication, so they gave me a multiplication problem. I finished right away, and the poor guy next to me, he took about five minutes to finish.

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Then we moved to the Second Ward, South El Paso. That helped; I could talk to people; I could communicate. Probably I didn't learn English as fast, but it made it a lot easier for me. My mom tried [to learn English], but it was so hard that she gave up. [At home] it was Spanish all the time, even television. If you tried to put [on] an English channel, she would get mad at you because she wouldn't understand it. Home was Spanish and school was Spanish. Only with the teachers did we speak English. As I remember, I couldn't carry on a regular conversation in English until I was fourteen or fifteen years old.

At Hart School in the Second Ward you go at your own pace. You don't go with the rest of the class. They'll give you a test, and if you're advanced, they'll give you advanced work. In my math I finished everything they could give me, so I started working with decimals in the fourth grade. Then I started liking getting good grades. I would get A's and B's, and people would notice me more and say, "That's good, that's good." When I started junior high school, I noticed how things were, and I [decided] that I didn't want to live in [government housing] projects all my life and do nothing. So I started liking school more and started learning more. I want to be world famous, hopefully, sometime.

I don't know what made me decide to go to college. I have two older brothers and an older sister, and none of them graduated from high school. They're pretty bright, but they never liked school. Numbers — those were the easiest things for me. When I was six years old, over there in Juarez, my brothers would write on the wall something like " $1 + 1 = 2$ ." They would teach me. Then when my sister was in the first grade, she didn't like school. She would always cry, so I would go with her and stay with her so she wouldn't cry. But I ended up doing the work, and she ended up still crying.

I started working when I was a freshman [in high school]. I took a job as a construction worker. It was hard. Then when I was a sophomore, I was a member of the Boys' Club. We had a Boy of the Year campaign, and I was running for [it], so they offered me a job at Sun Drugs. I worked there for three years. In the summer I would work something like five or six hours a day, and then during school I would work on Saturdays only, like eight or nine hours.

When I was a freshman, I also was in the Summer Engineering Institute\* at UTEP. They advertised it in the high schools, but one of the prerequisites was that you had to be a U.S. citizen. I wasn't, so I told the teacher.



They talked to somebody, and they let me. The coordinator was Dr. [Juan] Herrera, and Dr. [Stephen W.] Stafford would help. They introduced us to all kinds of engineering — mechanical, industrial, electrical, metallurgical. We worked with computers, and I liked computers. That's how I started.

I went to Bowie High School from 1978 to 1982, and I graduated in May of 1982. [While] I was going to high school, I started going to UTEP. They had a new program called Junior Scholars. You were allowed to take college courses while in high school. My junior year in high school, I took Calculus I at UTEP; I got an A in that class. My senior year I took Calculus II; I got a B in that class.

I wanted to go to MIT. I had two girlfriends from Bowie. One of them went to MIT, and the other went to Columbia University in New York. So I wanted to go to MIT or Columbia, and I started applying. I also applied to UTEP. The Boys' Club encouraged me the whole time. The counselor's name was Richard Flores. He graduated from [UTEP]. He would tell me, "Go to UTEP. Don't go out of town. It's a cultural shock, and you're going to be alone, and it's a lot of money. Just go to UTEP, and then after that you can go to graduate school out of town." And then he would tell me, "Apply for a scholarship. You'll get it. You'll get some money."

I put a lot of time into my application. I typed everything. I didn't send it by mail. [I thought] maybe it wouldn't get there. I came over and gave it personally to a scholarship officer. So then I got a letter saying that I got the Stevens Scholarship, which is for \$1,000 [per year], but it said, "You're still being considered for the Presidential [Scholarship]." And then in March, I was going to a tennis tournament in Deming. I was on the tennis team. We were going to leave, and they came into the office and told me, "Jose, Jose, you got a Presidential Scholarship." I was so surprised. We were invited to a press conference and all this. My mother was proud, and my photo came out in the newspaper and everything.

MIT [offered me] a good financial-aid package, but I would have to borrow about \$3,000 every semester — and then work. And since I'm the youngest, I would have [to leave] my mother alone, and I didn't know if I wanted to do that. So after I got the Presidential Scholarship for \$1,500 per year, I said, "I'm going to stay here."

[UTEP] was very different from Bowie High School, where probably 99 percent [of the students] are Mexicans. Then you go to college, and



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it's the opposite — there are Anglos and Mexicans and people from all over the world. That was a big difference right there. I think the biggest shock was that I wasn't disciplined enough. High school was easy, so I wasn't used to doing much homework and studying. Then I got to college, and I started getting into trouble when I had a lot of homework. It took me a couple of semesters, [but] I learned my lesson.

When I started attending UTEP I took a work-study job. Obviously I would have preferred not to work, but that was impossible. It wasn't that easy, but it's "do-able." When I was a senior I took this co-op job in Juarez. I would work nineteen hours a week and go full-time to school. It was with Packard Electric, a subdivision of General Motors. It was good, because I got a lot of experience. So when I got my first real job [after graduation], I knew what to expect.

When I started UTEP, I had to ride the bus all year long. Then my sophomore year my mom loaned me her car. When I was a junior I finally had enough money to buy my first used car. It was a big '76 Plymouth, and it lasted me about a year. After that my mom lent me her car again. I wanted to be a computer programmer more than an electrical engineer, but programming was so easy for me that it was [not] challenging. I [preferred] something more challenging, so I went into "Double E" [Electrical Engineering], and it was a challenge, believe me. It's the hardest, [but] it's exciting.

I was a member of the Mexican-American Engineering Society. We went to high schools like Bowie and Jeff[erson] and Ysleta, where there are Mexican-Americans that might not be motivated to go to college, and we would talk to them. It's called the PACE program, Promotion and Awareness of Careers in Engineering. We tried to get students interested in college that might not [otherwise] be interested because maybe they think it's too hard. I joined "I Triple E" [IEEE], the Institute of Electrical [and Electronics] Engineers. Then I got accepted into the electrical engineers' honor society, Eta Kappa Nu. I also got accepted into the senior honor society, Mortar Board.

I went through the St. Pat's Day initiation when I was a freshman. All the students try to recruit you, so they can paint you green. There were about six of us who said if we do it all together it won't be that bad. You have to get here at eight in the morning, and they'll paint your face with lipstick, crayons, and markers. They'll paint your shirt and your pants,



but they tell you to wear something that you can throw away after you finish. The only thing I didn't like is [that] they gave you chewing tobacco. I hated it. I almost threw up. But the good thing is that all the professors are there also, and some of them have to get initiated.

We started in the Union Building, and we'd go all around campus singing two songs. One of them is the Mickey Mouse song: "Who's the leader of the band? M-i-c-k-e-y M-o-u-s-e." And the symbol of that is: To engineers, all the other classes are Mickey Mouse courses. Then we'd leave campus and go over [near] Sun Bowl Drive. They have a cave there which they call the Miner Cave. You stay there and pay respects to it by being silent three minutes. Then they take us over to the back of that company that sells cars, by the University Theater, on some hills. They blindfold you, and then they pour everything on top of you! I mean eggs, food that's been there for days, honey, flour — everything! Then after that, they'll get little groups of about four or five, and they'll take you walking around on the hills to the holy stone, [the Blarney Stone]. They'll pour a bucket of green paint on top of your head, and you have to kiss [the stone]. It's fun; it's part of college life. And man, it gets engineers together.

I'd been wanting to become a U.S. citizen since I was eighteen. When I was a sophomore, I turned in my application. It took a year for them to call me to take the test. And the day they called me back, I had a test on electromagnetic fields at UTEP. I went to talk to the professor, and he told me, "They can wait." Seriously, he wouldn't let me [out of class], so I had to call back and tell them I can't make it. They called me back again, and I had another test that day, but it was [a different] professor. He was nice and told me, "Go ahead. I can always give you a makeup." So I went and took the test, and two months later I became a citizen. The day was January 18, 1985.

I graduated in May, 1986, with a bachelor's [degree] in electrical engineering. My brother was in the navy at that time in Virginia, and he came over for my graduation. My grandparents and my mom [also came]. I was the first one [in my family] to graduate from high school or college. [My mom] was very proud. If it had been up to her, all of us would have graduated from high school and college. She always told us that school was more important [than work], because once you have the education you can do more for yourself.

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My first three months I still worked for Packard Electric. They couldn't make me an offer because they had a hiring freeze, so I told them I wasn't going to work for them anymore. I was unemployed for three months. I wrote letters to eight companies, like Rockwell International, McDonnell-Douglas, and Bell Helicopter. I had some interviews at UTEP, too. Bell Helicopter called me. It was funny. They couldn't get in touch with me, and they couldn't leave a message, because my mom didn't know any English. My mom would tell me, "Somebody called you, but I don't know who it was. They didn't know any Spanish, and I don't know any English." Finally they [reached] me, and they flew me over there for an interview. I started working for Bell in February, 1987.

I have always set goals for myself. First I wanted to graduate from high school. Then later on I wanted to be an engineer, and now I am. I wanted to be able to have a better life, the American dream: have a house, two cars. Now I want to be the president of Bell Helicopter!

Interviewed by Rebecca Craver, August 3, 1985, El Paso; interviewed via telephone by Charles H. Martin, September 20, 1989, El Paso and Bedford, Texas.



*The real measure of a university is the quality of its graduates. . . . I think the value that we add between admission and graduation of our students is far greater than at most institutions.*

## Diana Natalicio

Faculty, 1970-1979

Dean of Liberal Arts, 1979-1984

Vice President, 1984-1988

President, 1988-Present

I was the first in my family to go to college, so I feel very sympathetic towards our students, because I was very much like them. I attended St. Louis University as a commuter student, living at home and working part-time as a secretary. In my senior year I applied for a Fulbright scholarship and ended up getting one to Brazil. For the first time in my life I left home, and I went on my first plane ride to Rio de Janeiro. I got down there and did a year as a Fulbright student.

From Rio de Janeiro I went to U.T. Austin and became a [teaching assistant] while working on a master's degree in Portuguese. I completed my degree in 1964 and received a scholarship from the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and spent the next eighteen months living in Portugal, studying literature. I came back to Texas and was recruited by the graduate program in linguistics at U.T. Austin. I got my doctorate in 1969, worked a year as a research associate in the Center for Communication

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Research, and then was offered a faculty appointment as a visiting associate professor at U.T. El Paso.

I came out here and fell in love with the place. I had never been in the desert before, but I found the dry climate to be just exactly right for me. I especially liked being on the border, because my background had been in romance languages and linguistics. When I was offered a [permanent] appointment the following year, I said, "Yes, I'd love to." I've been here ever since. It's been a very good place for me.

I became department chairman of the Modern Languages Department almost by default, because the previous chairman went to Rumania on a Fulbright! I found that I liked the job. After a couple of years I was asked to be associate dean and then dean of the College of Liberal Arts. Following that, Dr. [Joseph D.] Olander left the university, and the vice president's position was open. I decided that I'd like to try that and applied and was selected for that position. And, of course, Dr. [Haskell] Monroe\* eventually left. I agreed to be interim president, then subsequently I became a candidate for the position. In February of '88 I was named president by the regents.

Dr. [Joseph R.] Smiley\* was president when I arrived. In 1972 Dr. Smiley resigned, and the regents appointed Dr. [Arleigh B.] Templeton\* to be our president. What I remember best about Dr. Templeton's tenure was his effectiveness as a spokesman in Austin for U.T. El Paso. He was very good at that. He was very close to a number of people in Austin and therefore could get their attention and could make our case. He was also very effective in getting building projects under way out here, and we certainly needed those. He built a number of buildings that are important to us today: the Special Events Center, for example, where Don Haskins'\* basketball team does its thing, the East Union, which is a very fine facility, the Administration Annex, and the Engineering Complex. All of these facilities Dr. Templeton was very much involved in.

Another very important event [in the 1970s] was approval of our doctoral program in geological sciences. That degree was extremely important symbolically. I think we needed the recognition of a doctoral program to be taken more seriously. Geology was a good [choice], because it represented continuity in terms of our institutional history, and it also represented a strength in terms of faculty research and activity.



Under Dr. Monroe's leadership we certainly made progress in expanding our campus facilities. The new building for the College of Business Administration was an important [milestone] for a program that was growing very rapidly. I think the most striking [development] on campus during Dr. Monroe's tenure as president was the construction of the library building, which will be five years old [in 1989]. It's hard to believe that it's already five years old. It is a building that has very high visibility. It is a building that is very impressive in terms of its Bhutanese style, and our students are proud of it.

The 1980s were a little bit uneven in terms of budgetary support. We've had a lot of ups and downs in the state's economy, so we spent more of our time than we would have liked to trying to balance the budget and trying to cope with the constraints imposed upon us. A growing enrollment and a constrained budget made it very difficult to manage. Another major event that occurred was that tuition was increased rather substantially during this period. The steady growth in our enrollment was abruptly truncated by the tuition increase. This had a particularly devastating effect on students from Mexico. Our enrollment went down from over 600 Mexican students to 235. That was very bad in terms of our regional emphasis. I think we have probably seen the worst of the economic problems, but areas like the library are having great difficulty recovering. Problems such as the skyrocketing costs of journal subscriptions make it very difficult for us to keep pace, even if our budget were not constrained. Fiscal constraints were certainly a theme of the '80s; I hope we're getting out of that.

There have been several [milestones since I've been president] that I think are important. One certainly is the authorization that we've just received for a second doctoral program, in electrical engineering. After we succeeded in getting the doctoral degree in geological sciences we were categorized as a single doctoral granting institution by the Coordinating Board\*. The designation was extremely frustrating. I don't think that you do anybody very much good by truncating their aspirations, and that's what that category did for us. Achieving authorization for a second doctoral degree really says a good deal about the quality of our faculty over in electrical engineering, but it also says that UTEP is an important institution in the state and that its role is changing. That is extremely important. The degree is important for the people who will be served by



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it, but [it] is even more important for what it represents for the community and for the institution.

Another major accomplishment was the accreditation of the College of Business [Administration], again because it validates what we do. It says to the world, not just to the community, that we are a quality program, that our graduates have met the highest standards. This is important in terms of our visibility statewide and nationally — that people know we are an institution to be taken seriously. All of our programs are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and we have specific accreditations in engineering, nursing, and education. But we were conspicuously absent from the roster of institutions that are accredited with business. For several years our programs had been of a quality sufficient to be accredited, but we had to go through the [formal] procedures to earn it. Accreditation really is a stamp of approval for programs in particular disciplines, by people in those disciplines. It says you have met the highest standards.

A major accomplishment [during 1988-89] was that we were able to bring in nearly twenty million dollars in new contract and grant awards for research. This is important because it represents an increase of fifteen million dollars over the previous year's total, [which] was the highest we'd ever had before. We have really made a quantum leap in terms of our research funding. Again this is a major accomplishment, not just because we bring resources to the community and create jobs for students, but also because it again says to the outside world that we are an institution to be reckoned with. Suddenly we are a hot property as an institution. People want to be associated with us; now we don't have to ask to be associated with them. We still have to write proposals, we still have to [produce] quality, but it's very nice to have people call us.

The Diamond Jubilee celebration was an important one in many ways. We divided it into three phases. One was to commemorate the past, a second was to celebrate the present, and a third was to challenge the future. The way we attempted to approach it was to identify historical events that we think deserved commemoration. For example, we commemorated the regents' establishment of [the School of Mines] with a plaque out on the corner of Hawthorne and University avenues. We commemorated service by [members of] the U.T. El Paso community in the



Vietnam conflict by rededicating the memorial triangle to include them. We also attempted to focus on our Bhutanese architecture.

Celebrating the present was primarily an effort to get the word out about us, to let people know who we are and what we're doing, to celebrate our excellence and our quality. Part of [those activities] were TV spots, radio spots, billboards, a music video, and newspaper ads. With respect to the future, we have a project underway which has been named "U.T. El Paso 2001." Its major focus is an attempt to involve members of the El Paso community in evaluating their sense of what El Paso-Juarez will be like at the turn of the century and what its needs will be. The final report will make recommendations to the university about the role that we should play in assisting that development.

Eighty-five percent of our students are drawn from El Paso County. For many students, we are the only option that they have for a four-year degree. In saying that, I think I can say with pride that if you only had one option this would be a very good one. About three-fourths or more of our students are the first in their families to attend college. It's very important to create conditions for success, and we have a strong sensitivity towards the needs of students. We feel that those students who come to us with aspirations for a four-year degree deserve a real chance, and that doesn't mean a revolving door. I also think we can be very proud of our faculty. We have outstanding people who are very committed. Unlike a lot of very large research universities, faculty here have direct contact with undergraduate students, even freshmen. We use [teaching assistants] sparingly. We don't have the kind of distance between faculty and students that you find in many institutions.

We also have a number of support services that help students find their way as first generation college students through this rather large institutional process, [such as] Study Skills and Tutorial Services and the Advising Center. These kinds of support mechanisms are particularly important for first generation students. We're very committed to a quality experience. The real measure of a university is the quality of its graduates. We are not judged by who enters, but by who exits with a degree.

I think the value that we add between admission and graduation of our students is far greater than at most institutions, because many times our students are initially unsure of themselves and don't have the kind of self-confidence that they need. Our students don't normally finish a degree

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in four years. The average is about six years, because they're employed and have family obligations and simply can't hurry their way through. They're not in a dormitory next door to the campus. They're living at home, just as I did. We need very much to be sensitive to their needs. I think overall we offer a very nice balance between research and teaching. We have a good deal more compassion for students than you find at a strictly research institution. So maybe we have the best of both worlds. We'd like to think so.

Interviewed by Charles H. Martin, November 22, 1989, El Paso, Texas.