

**Oral History Interview: Sr. Annette Bourret, Administration**

**Date of Interview: 9/23/83**

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Date of transcription: 1/24/00

**Dorna Cierno:** Please give me some background information on yourself if you don't mind.

**Annette Bourret:** Well, my name is Sr. Annette Bourret. In my family, there are three Catholic people of the Sacred Heart. One has died, both have been history professors who got their PhD's from Stanford and taught in our schools. My second sister now teaches at the University of the Sacred Heart and has been there since 1958.

I came to the university in 1966 and it was a completely new experience to me, because all of my religious life I had worked in our elementary and secondary schools. From 1951 until 1963 I was principal of the Sacred Heart School in Seattle. Then, in 1963, I was transferred to El Cajon at the Sacred Heart School there and was principal for two years. It was preschool through grade 12.

Opportunities to see the College for Women there were not many because at that time they were still semi-cloistered, which our religious order had. It was just at the time of the beginning of Vatican II. There were all these changes that were going on in religious life.

In the spring of 1963, the provincial, who was in residence here at the College for Women, asked me if I would leave El Cajon and become financial aid officer for the College for Women. At that time the College for Women did not have an official Financial Aid Office. The President gave out some scholarships and work-study jobs and that kind of thing, but there were no federal funds. There were just funds that the College for Women gave itself to give to students.

I guess I found it a little difficult to accept the change because all of my religious life I had worked in what we would call our 'categories,' our grade schools and high schools. In the summer of 1966, I came here [to USD] and was also at that time what was known as the Assistant to the Superior. With that came the responsibility for the maintenance of all the buildings, which would be now what is Camino and Founders Hall. I didn't have charge of the gardens, fortunately, but I was responsible for maintaining making sure everything was clean and in order, etc.

I can remember being told that these reception rooms which are no longer in existence except for the French Parlor should be exactly so. I took pictures so that I would know where to put the furniture back when it was clean, so that everything

would be just so. I was responsible to see that the curtains were not worn out. There had to be new curtains made. I did that for Camino Library.

**DC:** So that was more like a housingkeeping/maintenance sort of thing.

**AB:** Yes. Yes, I had all of that and for those new rooms for all the committee meetings during the summer.

As financial aid officer, we applied for federal funding and we got them. I set up the office and started first with loans and then went into the various programs. During the summer, I would get work-study students that were entering college as freshmen who lived in the local area to come in and I would ask, "would you like to earn some of your money ahead of time?" They'd wash windows and cleaned and did all kinds of things, and I organized and supervised the whole project. I had others who helped me but I was the one who was ultimately responsible for all of that. Some of those students from those days are still very good friends of mine. One of them is Bill Hall in the library, who washed windows and did all kinds of things when he was entering from high school.

Well, I went on with financial aid for about two years and attended as many workshops as I could so that I would learn my business. I think in 1968 I was asked to also do admissions for the College for Women because at that time the president of the university, Sr. Nancy Morris, was running an admissions office through her secretary. She asked me if I would take on admissions along with financial aid. When that happened, my office became the room that is now the all purpose room on that corner and my secretary for financial aid was in the little room next to the French Parlor where they store the chairs now.

At that time we did not have the full dorm built. The dorms were not built. In Dushane Hall where they have the quad rooms, I had a big room where all the secretaries were. Then I moved to where Dr. Brandes is and I was director of financial aid and by that time the merger had begun. This was 1969, '68-'69. The merger had begun. I think in 1969 we really started. We merged the financial aid office and I did that, and I took over financial aid for the College for Men as well and went on with the College for Women. There was a gentleman that was named director of admissions, who had worked at San Diego State, he was here for only one year and his contract was not renewed in the spring of 1970.

Mike Saik had been working in the Admissions Office of the College for Men. It was at that time we started recruiting together as an institution. When we went to schools to interview students and make presentations, we did, as though we were merged although, we were not. We were kind of hazy on how all of this was, but it did

work. I was director of financial aid and assistant director of admissions. Then the gentleman that had the position of admissions, as I said, was not rehired. In March of 1970 I was asked whether I would like to be director of admissions or financial aid. I didn't take me very long [to decide], I gladly gave up the Financial Aid and someone was hired. I was asked to interview people, which I did with others on campus.

**DC:** It sounds like in your positions as financial aid director and in the admissions program it was very small staffed for both programs, primarily with yourself.

**AB:** However, no I would like to clarify that. By this time, we had, I would say, we had two or three what I would call recruiters, and one of them was Mike Saik. So, when I became director of admissions, he became assistant director of admissions. And then we had I think two others, one woman and one man for a year, when we were in this office. There was a classroom next to the registrar's office that we used for the counselors, and we had a counter in there and people would come in and pick up catalogs.

I think they have reorganized that whole registrar's area now. I don't know if things are exactly how they were then. But I know the counselors were down in that area. It was not conducive to counseling; it was very bad. My secretary, this was an open hallway here, this corridor went all the way to the window, this is where my secretary sat and it was just a counter. There was no door with locks or anything. I don't know why the typewriters weren't stolen or anything else. We were very trusting in those days. By this time, the merger had so progressed that we began having a little physical plant set up, so I lost the responsibility with maintenance. That dropped. My full work was admissions.

I would like to go back a little bit on the financial aid part. It was a very interesting experience working with students and parents for financial aid, because I tried to work out financial aid packages that worked. We needed students to attend the university. I would ask the parents to come, and at that time there was still a great resistance to parents' confidential bank statements, which are required universally for anybody that is going to college with financial aid. But 12 years ago, a lot of parents resisted, they felt it was invasion of their privacy. So, I would try to explain to them and try to find out as much I could, for instance, about the California State scholarship programs, which is one of the best scholarship programs I have ever seen in the nation.

A student in San Diego could attend USD without any more cost than if they were to attend San Diego State or UCSD, if you had a good scholarship. Our tuition at that time was on a par with the Cal State grant. So, if the tuition say, was \$2,500, the student had a scholarship for \$2,500. Their expenses as a commuting student would

be the same whether they were at San Diego State or UCSD and I'd use that great deal to encourage local students to have the option of private education. Each year we have increased the number of scholars. That was a great need to the university, that you were able to increase the enrollment in that way.

**DC:** Did the university have any trouble in the beginning getting federal funding being a private institution?

**AB:** Well, we just took the forms and tried to figure out from our enrollment what we could use. No one ever got the full funding; you always knew that you wouldn't. You would only get a percentage of it. You were advised to, when you applied, to ask for more and then it was a percentage you would get. I was amazed how easily it all worked. Then eventually, with completion of the merger, those funds were not separate funds, College for Men/ College for Women; they became funds for the University of San Diego. While I was director of financial aid, I think they were still coming in under separate awards to two institutions because the actual merger did not take place officially until after Dr. Hughes came.

**DC:** As director of financial aid you handled it before the official merger for both colleges?

**AB:** Yes. I did it for both colleges. I spent the morning down here and in the afternoon, I went up to an office in Serra Hall and would meet with Men students and take care of them.

**DC:** I realize the merge took place over several years. In bringing together the two admission programs, did you encounter particular difficulties?

**AB:** It was a very interesting experience. We had a very large admissions committee. The academic deans for both the College for Men and the College for Women sat on the admissions committee. The joint faculty approved the admissions requirement for the students, the level of SAT scores, GPA and so on, what was necessary to get in the university. I can remember having a meeting in what is now the faculty lounge in the corridor. It had a very large table. The table seats 14 when it is extended and that entire dining room set is now in Dr. Hughes' home. The people at that table were faculty from the College for Men and the College for Women; the director of admissions, the assistant director of admissions, they all sat there. There was a real struggle to bring the admissions policy of both schools in line. I think I can begin by

saying that the College for Women had standards a little higher than the College for Men. It took a little while to get that out of the way.

In the early '70s, as I look back, I think we were hearing more cases than normally. I think it was because we wanted to raise the academic standards of the entire undergraduate student body. Therefore, they were just being perhaps more cautious than they needed to, but I think it was a very good way to go about it. It is certainly better to be stricter than to be too little. Faculties had to merge; each department had to merge. I am sure other people have or will tell you about these experiences, but I was not ever a faculty person. I was always in administration. I think the reason they had such a large committee is because they just wanted to make sure we were doing it right and that we would have academically qualifying students. We didn't want to have the two groups merging with different standards.

The class that entered in 1971 was the first one for which I felt fully responsible because they recruited all the way through 1970. In the summer of 1970, approval was given to me to go to a summer institute at Harvard University. A summer institute for admissions officers. At that time, it was almost a three weeks course. They have now shortened to about nine days because it is so expensive to house and all of that. I found that simply a marvelous experience, and it really helped me a great deal to professionally know how admissions should be run. They would only take a group of 35 men and women to live over at a dorm in Radcliff. It was run by a college board with professors from Harvard University. It was just an outstanding experience. I was the only person from the West Coast, so I was exposed to the admissions of schools from the East. I was very grateful for that experience.

**DC:** Right about that time Harvard and Radcliff merged, I think.

**AB:** Yes, but this was a women's dorm at Radcliff and the houses were right around the corridor. The admissions committee eventually worked out so that a priority was given to the director of admissions to accept and deny students that meet certain categories. If they met all standards, then I could automatically admit students. If they didn't meet the standards at all, then I could automatically reject them. All those that were in the gray area; that maybe their SAT scores were not as high or maybe they did not have as many academic subjects, various qualification that are there, but there seemed to be a student that probably could be given a chance. We had a faculty committee appointed by the President.

In later years, it has always been someone from the English Department, someone from Math, and usually someone from Psychology. The director of the academic services, Pat Watson, is always a member of the committee. We all reported to her; admissions, financial aid, registrar, all report to that office, Pat Watson. She was

always on the committee, the director, assistant director of admissions, and three faculty members. The only cases that are reviewed are those who do not meet all the requirements, they meet some of them but not all of them.

**DC:** If you accepted students on a conditional basis would you have followed up with a meeting on those students to see that once the student enrolled . . .

**AB:** Well, we never admitted students conditionally. A conditional acceptance is not something that the university does. The students are either accepted or not. The committee might recommend that the student take a basic English course. They might limit them to 12 units the first semester, something like that, but there was never a conditional acceptance. But they do have a system now of certain students that they are tracking. You would have to speak to someone in the Admissions Office because this tracking that they are doing, I know about it, but I don't feel I am the person qualified to tell you about it.

**DC:** Was that done before?

**AB:** It was done to a certain extent, yes. But I think now that it is a little more organized. Then of course the thing of tracking, when they put in the preceptorial program, I don't know who you are going to ask to tell you about that because you should get that in somewhere, how the preceptorial program works. The problem that we saw was that so many students would say to me, 'Well I don't know who my advisor is,' and they fell between the cracks.

Dr. Ed Foster was academic dean in the early '70s; he came from Cornell. At Cornell, they have this preceptorial program which we adapted. We changed it a little, but we adapted it. Every freshman was assigned to a preceptor during the summer before they entered. They were assigned to a class that was supposed to be not any larger than 18, no more than 15 to 18 students. It is a general education requirement class that goes into their GE track. This professor is their advisor for the entire freshman year.

Now, as I was saying I think you ought to get someone who really is from the academic side to tell you about it. But if anybody was tracked, it was these students, because no one could say they didn't have an advisor. Those advisors were in their first semester. They had to have a preceptorial. If you look at class lists, you will see all of this. If you have over 700 freshmen, as I mentioned, you will need a preceptorial to take care of them. Their professor is responsible to take them through pre-registration in the second semester and also for pre-registration in May, for fall of the following year. By that time, they are supposed to be pretty far along and have an advisor in the

school or department of their major. This has been one of the best things the university ever did academically. It's marvelous.

**DC:** Once the student was accepted here at the university, you really didn't have much more to do with students.

**AB:** That is correct.

**DC:** I would like to talk about the relationship between the College for Women and the College for Men. As we have already established you came in at the point when the two were getting ready to merge.

**AB:** Were beginning to talk. I remember probably the second year I was here, a group of professors in the school at the College for Men invited us to participate in a workshop, and we signed up in various areas for which we would like to discuss. We went to the law school. It was extremely interesting. I, of course, sat in on the group that wanted to talk about admissions. I think it was probably the first time I ever really had the chance to talk to anyone together on the issue. I found it to be a very, very wonderful experience.

In the beginning of the merger, what they tried to do first was to merge everything that could be merged that didn't involve faculty. For instance, there were three bookstores and they moved them as one. They allowed the men students to come to the dining room with women, so there wasn't so many kitchens. We cut down on overhead, which is really what it amounted to. They merged financial aid, they merged admissions, all of that, so that you weren't doing double.

Then, of course the two Boards of Trustees were merged. I was a member of the Board of Trustees when I came to the College for Women. At that time, there was no lay members on the Board. As the merger process went on, they realized it would be very wise to have some lay members on the Board of the College for Women. A couple of us resigned in order to make place because the by-laws provided for X number on the Board, so we just resigned so that some lay members could come on. Then, as I say, until Dr. Hughes came, I think we still had two presidents, two academic deans, and so on.

**DC:** Was there any difficulty in merging the faculties or the classes?

**AB:** I don't have any idea once they merged. The women students were to be allowed to take some courses that were not offered at the College for Women, perhaps more advanced science courses, like Physics. The College for Men had no fine arts. Their

language department was not strong, so there was cross registration. And then in the other departments I can remember one of our students came out from the East for just a year to be here. She was a professor of English and she turned out to have a class in poetry with all male students and it was her first experience. She had a marvelous time. I saw her a couple of years ago and she reminded me about it. I saw her in New York and she reminded me of that experience when she was just here for that one year.

**DC:** I would like to ask you what you have noticed or what you have seen between the University of San Diego and the community of San Diego? What kind of a relationship have you seen between those two?

**AB:** Certainly, I think we are better known than what we were before. I belong to several organizations. I belong to a scholarship foundation which I began attending when Sr. Morris, the President of the College for Women, asked me to attend this foundation that gave scholarships to students in San Diego county that had graduated from high school in San Diego county. The first time I went to that meeting, one young man from the College for Men had been awarded the scholarship, period.

Well, as time has gone on and I have remained in membership to this foundation, our men and women receive 50 percent of the scholarships. It has just been an interesting experience to see how the university has been known and recognized in the community. To go that first time and just hear this one student from the College for Men, being voted on to get a scholarship, with all these other students that were going to San Diego State, UCSD, and for us to not even be part of the representative. But by being and remaining on that foundation and doing financial aid, I, of course, was able to turn things around and make our students aware that these scholarships were available.

**DC:** Were there other organizations in which faculty and religious people from the university worked with people in the community, that perhaps helped the University of San Diego?

**AB:** Yes, I think all of us that are in administration have been on different boards and so on. I have been on the University High School board. I was on that for four years. I belong to the National Conference of Christians and Jews Education Committee. Three or four times a year, we have the meetings here on campus. This is all going on with, I would say many, many people. Dr. Hughes does this a great deal. He is on all kinds of boards. Sr. Furay is on boards. Well you will have to find out from her. She is on many, many boards. So, the university through faculty and administration, is certainly



reaching out into the community. All the work that the Conference Center does. Yes, the University is much more known now. I think the faculty and their research per se are involved locally in all kinds of organizations.

**DC:** You think that has given the university a good reputation in the community?

**AB:** Oh, yes. A very good reputation.

**DC:** Okay, one more question. This is a real broad one. I don't know it probably is not a fair one to ask. What development have you seen in the philosophy and goals of the university since you have been here to the present?

**AB:** That is a tough one. I think that one of the goals and I don't know where it exactly comes in, and I haven't read the books lately, so bear with me. But I think we are all trying very hard to treat students as an individual. I know I do. I see it happening over and over again where we really go out of our way to make the student feel at home, wanted, respected as a person, and it's a very friendly atmosphere on campus. I can't tell you how many people tell me that, over the years when they come on this campus. I hear it all the time.

Of course, it's the most beautiful campus in San Diego, there is just no doubt about it certainly and we won't go into that part of it. I think that sense of respect for each individual is something that I hope we can continue to get a lot of remarks on. I think many, many people on campus feel that way.

**DC:** Everyone I have spoken to so far has said more or less what you have just said. Okay, thank you Sister.