

# *Oral History Interview with Thomas F. (Tom) Damon*

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California Department of Education  
Adult Education Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

**THOMAS F. (TOM) DAMON**

Palo Alto Unified School District, Director of Adult Education,  
1967 - 1982

Palo Alto Unified School District, Principal, Cubberley Adult School,  
1958 - 1967

California State Department of Education, Consultant, Bureau of Adult Education,  
1957 - 1958

Los Gatos Unified School District, Principal, Los Gatos Evening High School,  
1954 - 1957

National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education, President,  
1978-1979

Association of California School Administrators, Adult Education Chair,  
1973-1976

Santa Clara County Office of Education,  
Consultant in Adult and Vocational Education, 1966 - 1969  
University of California Extension, San Jose State University Extension,  
Instructor of Classes in Adult Education, 1959 - 1970

December 8, 1994

Los Altos Hills, California

**By Cuba Z. Miller**

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## RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None.

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## PREFACE

Adult education in California has a proud history of helping its citizens to meet the challenges of life in a huge, complex, multicultural state. Through the years, California adult educators have provided leadership to the nation in the development of innovative instructional practices and creative educational solutions.

The California Adult Education Oral History Project began in 1992 as a companion to a print history of adult education commissioned by the California Department of Education. As the century draws to a close, the growth and energy of California adult education in the sixties, the institutionalization of competency based education in response to the influx of refugees and immigrants in the seventies and eighties, and the innovative uses of technology of the nineties will be recorded.

The oral history project started with a small group of leaders whose careers began in the 1950's and 1960's and who witnessed and influenced important events in the development of the nation's largest adult education program. Seven interviews were added in 1994 - 95.

Significant assistance to the project was initially provided by the staffs of both the California State Archives and the Oral History Program, History Department, California State University, Fullerton. This project could not have begun without the vision of Raymond G. Eberhard, Administrator, Adult Education Policy and Planning Unit, California Department of Education, and the support of the late Lynda T. Smith, Consultant, Adult Education Policy and Planning Unit.

Linda L. West  
June 30, 1995

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

### Interviewer

Cuba Z. Miller

### Interview Time and Place

One interview was conducted in Los Altos Hills, California, on December 8, 1994.

### Editing

The interviewee reviewed and edited the transcript. When the tape was inaudible or when necessary for clarification, some information was added and is indicated by brackets [ ].

### Tapes

The original cassette tapes were transferred to reel to reel format at California State University, Fullerton and deposited with the California State Archives.

## CALIFORNIA ADULT EDUCATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: THOMAS F. DAMON

INTERVIEWER: Cuba Z. Miller

[Session 1, December 8, 1994]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

MILLER: This is Cuba Miller interviewing Dr. Thomas F. Damon at his home in Los Altos Hills, California, on December 8, 1994. I'm interviewing Tom to record his recollections of significant events and trends in California adult education during his career.

Good afternoon, Tom. Your active career in adult education spanned the years from 1954 to 1982, and you're still doing some work in the Palo Alto Adult School. Is that correct?

DAMON: That is correct. I entered adult education back in 1954, after some years of turbulence that adult education had gone through, and at that time I became a half-time adult school principal in Los Gatos and I continued to teach English at Los Gatos on the other half of my time, which seemed to work out quite well. It was a small adult school, and the prior principal of the adult school had retired. I had been working on an administration credential at Stanford, and I was very happy to get this part-time administrative assignment, which, I

think, continued for three years. It led to the State Department of Education, and from there to Palo Alto, and I did retire in 1982. I am very happy to say that it wasn't necessarily a complete retirement at the time. It was at that time under the district's early retirement plan, which continued for five years, and I derived some benefits from the school district for those five years, and I guess I was much more active than I am now in my continued service to the Palo Alto School District. At the moment, I am on call to give GED [General Educational Development] tests when the appointment schedule fits.

MILLER: When they need them.

DAMON: And that's just fine with me, because if I'm out of town I can so indicate that I won't be available, and it does take me back to the office. And I'm very happy to say that my successor, Henry Page, has been running a very fine program and has had a great interest in adult education, and I'm glad to have been a continuing part of it, even in a small way.

MILLER: Good. So actually, then, your motivation for first entering adult education was to help you in your work on your administrative credential. Is that right?

DAMON: Yes, it seemed to be. . . . Well, more than to help me in my work on the administration credential, it seemed to me to be a way of entering

the administrative arena, and this was the first opportunity that I had to do that. It also at that time led to the selection of a topic for my dissertation on the doctoral program that I was pursuing at Stanford.

**MILLER:** Okay. What do you remember about those first two or three years at Los Gatos? What were some of your trials or your triumphs? What are some first impressions from those early years in adult ed?

**DAMON:** Well, those are the period of my getting acquainted with really what adult education was all about. And I remember that in the years preceding 1954 there were a number of hearings that were conducted in Sacramento by some people, legislators who felt that adult education was being abused and there were classes that were being offered with state support that shouldn't be offered.

**MILLER:** That sounds familiar. [Chuckling]

**DAMON:** And there were some very embarrassing moments for some of the people who were in it in those early 1950 years, where they were called to testify and had to respond with some answers which weren't quite what they would like to have said about adult education. I remember that there were classes on how to train your dog, and it was alleged that these were classes more for the dogs than for the owners, but—

MILLER: Did they take a.d.a. [average daily attendance] on the dogs?

[Chuckling]

DAMON: I don't think they took a.d.a. on the dogs, but I do remember at one time seeing a dog training class operating on the lawn in front of Los Gatos High School—this was before I became the adult school principal there—and I sort of wondered about that. There were no dog training classes offered during the time that I was in charge of the program in Los Gatos. In fact, there was some legislation which curtailed some of the classes, particularly in physical education and arts and crafts, and there was an outright prohibition against any class that had dancing in it.

MILLER: That's when that came about, was in the early '50s then?

DAMON: Yes. And that was the other sore point, because folk dancing was a great producer of a.d.a. for local programs.

MILLER: Yes, I've been going to ask you about restrictions on course offerings at that time. So, in point of fact, they were developing restrictions during the time that you first started in the field.

DAMON: Well, I think those restrictions had been pretty much developed before I came into adult education.

MILLER: Okay. How else did the adult school programs look at that time, in contrast to now? Were they much the same, or a lot different, or . . . ?

DAMON: Well, I think they had a wider variety of classes because almost anything—except dancing—as it turned out in the legislation that followed, was applicable for a.d.a. You could get state attendance support for almost anything that you offered.

MILLER: What was the process for course approval?

DAMON: Well, you had a form on which you listed the class and the length of the class. I think you also listed the name of the instructor and maybe one or two other informational items, and these were forwarded to the Department of Education, the Bureau of Adult Education in Sacramento, and the consultants there looked over the list and generally approved them, put their rubber stamp on it, and sent back your copy. I think these were submitted in duplicate, and they kept a copy on file and you received yours back. And unless they deleted a class, and that was sometimes done, because I was in the process of approving classes during the time that I was with the State Department [of Education]. And unless your class was not approved, it was offered for apportionment, and the apportionment

for adult ed was the same as for anything else in the school district at the secondary level.

MILLER: So pretty much then any idea you had for a class was accepted?

DAMON: Yes, with some exceptions, and there was some thought that certain subjects should be . . . should have a more, well, let's say a suitable title. I recall shortly after I came into adult education there were some continuing hearings, and this particular hearing related to a title offered by one of the East Bay adult education programs. It was in cake baking, and the title was "Fun With Frosting." [Chuckling] I think when that came out in the testimony, the legislator who was doing the interviewing really chastised both the adult school principal and, I believe, his superintendent were present, in a very embarrassing way, and "Fun With Frosting" made the newspapers all up and down the state.

MILLER: I'm surprised that that didn't carry through rather than the basket weaving that you always hear about when they want to cast aspersions on it.

DAMON: Well, basket weaving was kind of a cliché; and particularly if you wanted to carry it a little bit further, they referred to it as "underwater basket weaving." During my time in the Department of

Education, I never recalled having a class in basket weaving offered for state approval.

MILLER: Who did you go to for help when you first started? Did you have a mentor who were . . . you know, leaders that you. . . . If you needed a question asked, who did you pick up the phone and call?

DAMON: I think I first went to the person who had preceded me, since he still lived in the community, and then gradually I got to know other adult educators in the area, so we sort of had a network where we would call our neighbor. One thing about adult education is that the practitioners, the administrators, are very willing to share their knowledge and background.

And I would also have to say that the State Department was looked upon as very friendly. Their staff was not large. I think the staff in the Bureau was one bureau chief and three consultants, and they traveled around over the state and were usually present at the quarterly meetings of our local area group. We had a Bay Area group, which now meets once a year but originally met at least three times a year, and that was always a good source of information. And I would say that the consultant that served our area, I think, initially was Stanley Sworder, and he was a very approachable person and very practical.

MILLER: You mentioned that taking the principalship at Los Gatos gave you a topic for your dissertation at Stanford, and I was particularly interested in that because it was on dissemination: "The Effectiveness of Various Practices in Disseminating Information about Public School Adult Education in California." Can you tell me anything about the major findings in your dissertation?

DAMON: I think the major finding was that—

MILLER: There wasn't any? [Chuckling]

DAMON: No, that the best publicity was the word-of-mouth publicity that came through satisfied customers in the class. And I haven't reviewed my dissertation in a while, but I think that rather high up there was also the fact that you did some publicizing through catalogues or flyers, brochures of various kinds; and that also had to play an important part, but more importantly was the word-of-mouth publicity by satisfied customers.

MILLER: Okay, good. Anything else about that period of time at Los Gatos? You've mentioned the hearings at the state that went on just prior to that. Were there any other major issues in adult ed during that time?

DAMON: Well, there have always been issues in adult education, and it seems to me that adult education has always been on the verge of, should I say, extinction, that there have been people in the state and the

legislature who have looked upon the money spent on the education of adults as being somewhat frivolous because they should have gotten their education when they were of high school age. I believe that we have now passed beyond that period, and I think adult education has become much more accepted as a continuing process through one's lifetime. The problem now is more of finding money to provide educational programs for adults, and I think in that respect the climate is more supportive of adult education than it was during the days of the early '50s.

I would mention one thing that occurred about that time, which was really a step forward, and I think that this happened about the time that I was in the Department of Education in Sacramento, '57-'58, that the idea of a school district being able to levy a small additional tax to support adult education. Ten cents per \$100 of assessed valuation tax, was in state law at one time, and I think the place where that figure came from was the fact that the Palo Alto Unified School District set aside 10 cents of its tax rate for adult education, even though it never formally took advantage of the opportunity to levy an additional 10 cents. But the idea of the 10 cents, I think, came from Palo Alto during the time that Henry Gunn was superintendent. One of the promoters of that was a little man,

who was a principal of Campbell Adult School, by the name of Ed Stanley who promoted that at every opportunity. And he was quite active in adult education circles although he held no formal office, but he was active in the CAAEA [California Association of Adult Education Administrators] Association and its legislative efforts.

MILLER: So the 10-cent tax was literally a good idea that spread throughout the state then?

DAMON: Yes, which lasted until Proposition 13.

MILLER: Yes, very good. You mentioned that this was about the time that you were in Sacramento, and you did go to Sacramento after your three years as principal at Los Gatos. Tell us some more about that Sacramento experience. What made you decide to go? What were your duties there?

DAMON: Well, let me back up a little bit. After becoming principal of the adult school in Los Gatos, I selected an adult education topic for my dissertation, and completed it in 1957, which was the year that I left Los Gatos. In the process of gathering the information for my dissertation, I became fairly well-acquainted with adult education over the state.

And in the spring of 1956, I believe it was, I received in the mail an announcement of an opening examination for a consultant in

adult education at the Bureau of Adult Education in Sacramento. And I took that examination and scored number one on the list. However, when I went up and was interviewed by George Mann [Chief, Bureau of Adult Education] and was offered the job, I decided that if I left Los Gatos that year, I could not work on my completion of my dissertation and the examination at Stanford at the same time I would be traveling around the state. So I declined that invitation and did not go to the Bureau that year.

But the following year I had another chance to go up and take the place of one of the consultants, Milton Babitz, while he worked on his dissertation and . . . or worked on his doctoral degree. So I did have a very happy outcome of the time of the examination for the position of consultant in adult education.

MILLER: So, when you went, it was just for a temporary position then?

DAMON: It was for a temporary position with the thought that it might work into a full-time position. My responsibilities there included approval of classes, and I did some traveling around visiting local programs. And at that time the consultants, and there were three of us for most of the year—there was a time when there were just two—but the consultants were given a certain region to be a part of, to work with. And the new Bureau Chief at that time, upon the retirement of

George Mann, was Stanley Sworder, who had been a consultant, and he was very easy to work with. He assigned me to the Bay Area. So I was sometimes able to end the week with a state car at home, and I would travel back to Sacramento the next week. There was also the possibility that I might work into a full-time, permanent job in Sacramento, and we did actually look around for buying a house in Sacramento. Probably the way things worked out is for the best.

MILLER: Just as well that you didn't? [Chuckling]

DAMON: But I did enjoy my year there, and I had an opportunity to look around over the state. I became acquainted with the program in Palo Alto, and when a vacancy occurred there, I was able to persuade the district to hire me, and so I moved in.

One of my responsibilities at the Bureau of Adult Education was for parent education, which had been the field that my . . . well, the person that I was replacing for the year, Milton Babitz, had filled. So I got to look at parent education programs all up and down the state, and very happily, Palo Alto had one which was kind of an exemplary program. So I was doubly happy to come to Palo Alto, where a lady named Besse Bolton had, with the encouragement of Superintendent Henry Gunn, developed a very fine participatory program for parents.

MILLER: Do you know when those parent participation nursery schools actually got started in California—you know associated with adult ed?

DAMON: I can't really say for sure at this time. I might have some literature that I can dig out of my files which would indicate more precisely, but I think the one in Palo Alto got started just after World War II, which would have been around 1945-46.

MILLER: But you don't know whether that was the first eligibility for them or not?

DAMON: I don't know.

MILLER: Yes, that's fine. It just kind of popped in my head when you were talking about it.

DAMON: Another thing which I might mention concerning my role in the Department of Education, Adult Education in Sacramento, was that at that time the community college system was under the State Department of Education. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Roy Simpson, had the responsibility for all of the educational levels in California, except for the University of California. The state college program, which later became state universities, was under the Department of Education.

MILLER: Oh, I didn't realize that the state universities had ever been under the Department of Ed.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: Because they were originally teacher training colleges? Was that the justification?

DAMON: That might have been the rationale. I don't know that much back into the history of it, but it could be. And the junior colleges were also under the Department of Education.

MILLER: I knew that. I knew that.

DAMON: And during that time, the state legislature developed what they referred to as a "tripartite system" of higher education in California, with the University of California being a part of it, and the state colleges being another part, and then finally the community colleges were split off from the Department of Education and they became the third segment of the higher education system in California. But during the time I was in the Bureau, I approved not only the adult education classes that were in the unified and high school districts, but also in the community college districts. So there was a little greater load of class approval than what exists with just the high school and unified districts.

MILLER: So there were college districts as early as the '50s, then, rather than. . . .

DAMON: The college districts? Yes.

MILLER: I thought they were still part of the public school system until sometime during the '60s.

DAMON: There were college districts. . . . Let me say that there were some—I believe this is correct—that there were some community college districts. I remember that—

MILLER: Kind of some of each?

DAMON: Some of each. The Foothill District was formed during the time that I was in the Department of Ed.

MILLER: Okay.

DAMON: Or was in the process of being formed. These were in those years following World War II where a lot of new innovations were looked upon very promisingly. And I don't know whether you realize it or not, but the community colleges in California did grow out of high school districts.

MILLER: Yes, I knew that. That's why I was trying to get it clarified, because I thought that originally they had the same school board as the high schools did.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: And then at some point some legislation broke them off, but apparently it wasn't a clean break. Apparently it was kind of staggered.

DAMON: In some cases, I think they had. . . . Well, the community colleges initially were formed as grades 13 and 14 for local continuation of the educational process in one's own home community at a very nominal cost to the student. And then with the tripartite plan for higher education in California, that encouraged if not mandated a separation from the high school districts, and gradually this was happening through the 1950s. The exact year when this became effective I do not recall, but the community college districts in the Bay Area here, Foothill, well, it was created brand-new, and San Jose gradually broke away from the high school district and formed its own district. I guess, College of San Mateo goes back a long ways, and I think it began as a part of a high school district somewhere.

MILLER: A high school district, yeah. Who were the other two consultants with you when you were in Sacramento? And when did they change the name from the Bureau of Adult Education to. . . ?

DAMON: I don't know when. . . . Well, in terms of when they changed it from the Bureau of Adult Education to something else—

MILLER: I think they're just called units now. There may have been a division in there at some point.

DAMON: It was sometime after I left. I think it was during Eugene DeGabriele's tenure as Chief of the Bureau, and about the time that

he left office, retired, I think it became. . . . There was a reorganization that took place, which must have been in the early '70s.

MILLER: Well, he was there in the early '70s, yeah. So it was a bureau up until then?

DAMON: Yes. And the other two consultants during that year, one of them was Larry [Lawrence E.] Koehler, K-O-E-H-L-E-R, who had been the principal at Alameda. In fact, I guess he came on board in 1956 when I declined to go to the Bureau, and so he and I and Stan Sworder constituted most of the staff at that time. There must have been someone else who left shortly about that time, too.

MILLER: Well, you said that Milton Babitz took the year off.

DAMON: Milton Babitz took the year off when I came on; and then for part of the year that I was there, there was still that vacancy; and during the year that I was there, Eugene DeGabriele came over. He was brought over from another segment of the State Department of Education. He became an adult education consultant and eventually the Chief of the Bureau.

MILLER: The Bureau Chief. What can you tell us about some of. . . . You know, we see a lot of these names in official reports, but they're just names, they aren't people to anyone now because not very many

people still know them. George Mann was the Bureau Chief when you started in adult ed. Did you get to know him very well at all?

DAMON: Not very well. But I do remember going to a conference, a CAAEA conference, in which I thought there was almost a reverence for George Mann. He was very highly regarded throughout the state in adult education circles.

MILLER: He was there for a long time. He started '34 to '56, so. . . .

DAMON: And I think that was interrupted by a leave of absence period where he—

MILLER: During the war.

DAMON: —where he served on active military duty; and if I'm not mistaken, for a time Manfred Evans filled in for him in the State Department of Education.

MILLER: But you did work with Stan Sworder, so you knew him relatively well.

DAMON: So Stan Sworder was the Chief of the Bureau during the time that I was a consultant in adult education.

MILLER: What was he like?

DAMON: He was a very nice individual, a very comfortable working relationship. He, I think, had a boat which he liked to sail on the lake up near Sacramento—I think it's Folsom Lake or something—and as a result, I guess, his wife was nicknamed Skipper.

MILLER: [Chuckling] Don [Donald A.] McCune [Director, Adult Education, 1975-86] had his airplane; Stan Sworder had his boat.

DAMON: I liked Stan Sworder. One thing which I tended to think was unfortunate: when he finally retired and left the Bureau, no one ever heard from him. He disappeared to pursue his own interests. I had a couple of reports from people who had seen him, and he was apparently pulling a trailer and traveling down into Mexico and around the United States. But he—

MILLER: Just disappeared.

DAMON: He just disappeared from the field of adult education, which I think was too bad.

MILLER: That's kind of strange, yeah.

DAMON: Because I think someone who has contributed so much leadership to a program was . . . well, it's unfortunate when they drop out of sight entirely because there's an element of being a senior statesman so to speak and an advisor, to sit back and see some of the things which you had worked on and how they developed.

MILLER: And when your hands are freed from the constraints of your job, then you can go ahead and talk about ideas that maybe not had been possible for you to do but which you certainly were interested in.

DAMON: And I see on your list the name of Milton Babitz. I particularly enjoyed my association with Milton Babitz. He was considered quite an authority in the state on parent education and was quite in demand as a speaker for little local events. I remember filling in for him once at a state meeting of the California Parent Teachers Association [CPTA]. I didn't have to do any more than stand up when I was introduced and maybe say a few words. But through the year I became quite well-acquainted with parent education programs operating through adult ed. But I don't think I did the quality job that he would have done had he been on duty during that year. He did return to that office, and then upon the election of Wilson Riles as State Superintendent of Public Instruction, he immediately tapped Milton Babitz as his number two person, as his chief deputy.

MILLER: So he just moved right on up the ladder then.

DAMON: And Milton remained in that job until his untimely death, which would have been, I guess, in the '60s sometime.

MILLER: Okay. Now, he wasn't in Sacramento when you were there but I think he was still active in adult ed, this Manfred Evans that filled in during the wartime years for. . . ?

DAMON: Manfred Evans was the Assistant Superintendent for Adult Education for Los Angeles.

MILLER: Okay. That's where Evans Adult School comes from, yeah.

DAMON: Yes, and he was one of the important people in adult education at the time that I came in. I recall visiting Los Angeles, I don't know what the purpose was, but I met him and had some small association with him. And at one time, this was during the time I was in the Bureau, he suggested, "Well, if you want a job, why don't you come down to Los Angeles and be one of the boys?" That was tempting, except that Palo Alto was more to my liking.

MILLER: [Chuckling] It was more tempting.

DAMON: And probably it's just as well that I never went to Los Angeles. But Los Angeles did have and has always had a very large adult education program.

MILLER: And I have to ask you, Tom, since he said, "Come on down and be one of the boys," there weren't very many women in adult ed for a long time.

DAMON: No, there were not.

MILLER: Were there any women leaders during. . . . You know, we're still talking about the '50s here.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: A little bit in the early '60s. But were there many women in administrative positions then?

DAMON: Very, very few. In fact, at that time, superintendents and boards of education were very reluctant to assign a female educator to run an adult education program because a large part of the program was in the evening and—

MILLER: And they couldn't take care of themselves. [Chuckling]

DAMON: However, there were two very prominent ladies in adult education at that time. One of them was Louise Heyl in Southern California. I think she was . . . her district was in Norwalk. And at that same time, her husband [Jack Heyl] was Director of Adult Education for Alhambra. And I believe they both served as presidents of the CAAEA, the California Association of Adult Education Administrators. I don't think that one followed the other, but they both had that role.

MILLER: At one time.

DAMON: And they were kind of "Mr. and Mrs. Adult Education," in Southern California at least. And a very prominent female in Northern California was Phebe Bostwick with the San Francisco Adult Education program. I cannot recall at the moment which of the adult schools she was the principal of [Galileo Adult School], but the other interesting fact is that she eventually married Alan Bostwick, who was the Director of Adult Education in the Sequoia [Union] High School

District, and so here was a "Mr. and Mrs. Adult Education" in Northern California.

MILLER: In Northern California. [Chuckling]

DAMON: And another name which comes to mind in the Los Angeles School District was a Lois Hotchkiss, and she was principal of one of the adult schools there, and I don't recall much more than that. But there were not very many women in administrative positions in adult education in those years. That's one of the changes that I see, because in recent years when I have gone to any adult education meeting, whether it's been the California Council for Adult Education [CCAEE] or an ACSA [Association of California School Administrators] adult education meeting, or a national meeting, or a Bay Area meeting, there are about as many women as there are men.

MILLER: Yes.

DAMON: And indeed—

MILLER: And even in the '70s when I first started going, there would be two or three women in the room, so. . . . [Chuckling] As long as we're talking about people, let's just jump forward a little bit in time and then we'll come back and pick up some of these. What about Eugene DeGabriele, in the early '70s?

DAMON: He came from another area of education in the State Department. I do not remember exactly what unit he was with, but I guess he asked for a transfer or was transferred over to adult education. He had to learn a lot about adult education because it was sort of out of his area, but he was a rather easygoing and affable individual. I don't think he had as many creative ideas as some of his predecessors, but he was a good caretaker of the program during some very important years.

MILLER: And really kind of transitional because he was not there very long.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: And the same with Roy Steeves. Apparently he served as Chief, Acting Chief, for just one year?

DAMON: I think he was Acting Chief—

MILLER: He had been a consultant before that.

DAMON: He had been a consultant, and I believe he was an Acting Chief for a year after Eugene DeGabriele retired, and about which time Don McCune came in. And there was some reorganization in the department, and I recall meeting Don McCune at . . . I think it was at a community college adult educators' meeting in Monterey or Pacific Grove, in that area, shortly after I became the state chairman for ACSA.

MILLER: And Don was able to give some stability for a period of time.

DAMON: Well, Don also came into adult education as a learner. He had not, to my recollection, been a field practitioner of adult education, as some of the rest of the people had been. Larry Koehler had been a practitioner, Stanley Sworder had been a field practitioner, so had Milton Babitz, and Eugene DeGabriele had not and Roy Steeves had not. I don't know too much about Roy Steeves. But Don McCune came in as a learner, and I think did a fine job in adult education.

MILLER: Even though he never learned how to tell jokes. [Laughter]

DAMON: Some people have that facility and some of us don't.

MILLER: So, anything else about the Department or the Bureau before we kind of move on?

DAMON: Well, just one observation at this point. My time up there was before federal money started to flow through the Bureau, and we had a very small staff. The full staff was a chief and three consultants. And I should also add that in addition to the adult education approvals, we approved state summer school programs.

MILLER: So that's why historically then so many adult school principals have been summer school principal also?

DAMON: I don't think that really had much to do with it.

MILLER: You don't think that had anything to do with it either?

DAMON: And also continuation schools, before they became a prominent part of the educational program, were approved through the Bureau of Adult Education office.

MILLER: So you really had your hands full, for the size of your staff then.

DAMON: We had a very small staff, and it's a much larger staff today.

MILLER: Yes, but as you say, they're federally funded today.

DAMON: Yes. Well, federal funds come in then through the Bureau.

MILLER: Yes. Okay, let's move on to Palo Alto in the '60s, and let's just talk a little bit about the Palo Alto Adult School and kind of use it as an example in how adult education programs sort of were tailored to fit their communities. How would Palo Alto's adult program be different from, or similar to, other programs in the state?

DAMON: Well, I think very early on Palo Alto had a good reputation for adult education, and at the time that I first became acquainted with it, it was a very well-regarded program, perhaps the best-known on the peninsula here, certainly much larger than the neighboring programs. Although about that time Sequoia, which was an old, established program, instituted a second center at Menlo Atherton High School, and when Palo Alto's second high school was built, Cubberley, it was organized as a separate adult school. That's where my first work station in Palo Alto came. I think that our program was very well

regarded by the community and it was enthusiastically supported by the [local] board of education. We had an exemplary program in parent education and we had a superintendent who was very supportive of the program, which made it a nice place to come to and be a part of.

MILLER: That superintendent support is really important, isn't it?

DAMON: Yes, it is.

[tape turned off]

MILLER: Okay, let's get back then to some of the things that you remember as highlights of the '60s. We sort of . . . we started talking about the community college districts as they were developing towards the end of the '50s, and I know that certainly that carried on through the '60s. At some point, local communities made choices as to where they wanted their adult education programs to remain or be conducted. What can you tell me about that? How were these choices made, and what kind of problems have resulted from that sort of splitting up of the junior colleges and community colleges from the high school districts?

DAMON: Well, initially the community colleges in California were formed as a part of high school and unified school districts, and that continued until this tripartite system of [higher] education mandated the

formation of separate junior college districts covering the state of California. And before that happened, the community colleges were in a position of being expansive and wanting to offer a complete program for not only grade 13 and 14 students, but occupational programs and programs for the whole community, so they got into adult education as well. And as I mentioned when we were . . . when they reported to the Bureau of Adult Education, there was kind of a central control over them. But the local school districts, when they put their adult education programs into the community colleges, usually did that for an economic purpose. Because it developed that the same program could bring in more state money to a district that had a community college if they put [adult education] in the community college, and that was how the [adult education] programs in San Francisco moved over to the community college district. They were placed in the community college while both programs were under the same administration because they got a little more money. That's the way it happened in Santa Barbara, that's the way it happened in San Diego.

MILLER: Okay, so they were still under the same school board when they moved to the college.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: And it was a matter of program following funding at that time.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: Okay. And so since they were already there in those—

DAMON: And they remained there.

MILLER: —in those large areas, they remained there.

DAMON: And in areas such as Palo Alto and a great many smaller communities that did not have their own community college built on top of the high school district, they remained in the high school district, unless the local board was interested in divesting themselves of the responsibility for adult education; in which case, in many instances the community college was very happy to take up that responsibility.

MILLER: Do you know what happened in Los Angeles? Because, of course, you know, adult ed remains with the public schools in Los Angeles, and it seems like their situation would have been comparable to San Francisco and San Diego.

DAMON: Well, I think philosophically Los Angeles was very much committed to local community adult schools, and its administrators were really dedicated to keeping it in the school district. You may remember that about that time the person who became the superintendent. . . . Well, let's see, this was in the early 1970s, I think, that. . . .

MILLER: You're talking about Bill [William J.] Johnston?

DAMON: Bill Johnston became superintendent, and he came right out of adult ed. Adult ed has had a history of very strong, supportive people in its adult education leadership, and apparently that carried over into the philosophy of the board and the superintendent.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

MILLER: Anyway, it seems like we've been handling this delineation of function for thirty years now and, [Chuckling] you know, it's still current. They're coming back again, saying that districts have to make sure that they have these agreements.

DAMON: Yes, this led to a problem and a very legitimate question which communities asked themselves: Why have two programs that deliver essentially the same kind of services? The difference being, though, that the community colleges offer . . . can continue and offer programs for credit at the college level, which a high school district cannot. And historically, I don't know whether there's been any changes recently, but a community college district could not offer a high school diploma except by some arrangement with the high school district.

MILLER: With the high school district. You've got a lot of perspective on this now. We were talking about this as one of the things about still being

around after you retire. But really, looking back over this, as I say it's been thirty years now that this has been going on, more than that, what do you really think about the governance of adult ed? I mean, do you think mistakes were made back there when things were splitting up between the colleges and the schools? Or do you think the high school districts are still better prepared to serve the community in these kinds of classes?

DAMON: Well, since I have spent my career in a bona fide secondary school setting, I would have to say that I'm partial to the arrangement where a high school district or a local high school can offer a program. I think that, for many of our students, coming to a local high school is less intimidating than going to a college campus. And I think the college administrations are more interested in this not so much for philosophical purposes as for a means of expanding their sphere of influence and building ever larger programs; and as the demographics bring up fewer students from the high schools, this becomes an area where they can expand. This isn't to say that they don't do a good job, but I think what they do is done at a more expensive cost to the community, the tax-paying community, than something offered through the high school district.

I should say, on behalf of the community colleges, they sometimes feel that their programs are a legitimate part of higher education, and high school districts, depending upon the viewpoint of the board and the superintendent, are sometimes happy not to think about adult education responsibility. But I think, as a part of a local community, I would rather go to something that's controlled by our local board of education for adult education offerings, particularly in basic education and English as a second language and so on.

MILLER: When you think of it in terms of skill level, you know, it certainly is another way of looking at which system [is more appropriate].

DAMON: It would seem to me that adult education should feed into some more advanced levels of skill development in community colleges.

MILLER: What other things were important to you during the '60s, to adult education during the '60s?

DAMON: One thing [that] developed during the 1960s was the matter of accreditation of separately organized adult schools.

MILLER: Okay, because they had been referred to as evening high schools, right? And then there came the organization for the separate adult school?<sup>1</sup> Is this. . . .

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<sup>1</sup>Separately organized adult schools preceded accreditation. Palo Alto Adult School became a separate school in 1921.

DAMON: Well, [adult school accreditation] followed the organization of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges [WASC], which replaced the University of California as the accrediting body for educational institutions at the secondary level in California. And shortly after that happened, the adult schools saw the high schools being accredited, and the question was raised: "Why can't we be accredited as well?" And back in . . . I guess it was about 1957-58 school year, the first adult school was visited for an accreditation visit.

MILLER: Do you know which one that was?

DAMON: I think that was Washington Adult School in Los Angeles, and the name of the principal at that time escapes me now, but he was a person I liked very much. Roy Stone. Roy Stone was the principal.

MILLER: Roy Stone? Okay. And it just kept growing from there.

DAMON: And it kept growing from there. And the executive director of the accrediting commission for schools was very amenable to being approached for this. I think the first executive director was, in fact, Les Hedge. I don't remember . . . at least he was executive director when I went onto the commission, and he was very sympathetic for adult ed and welcomed adult education input and the development of adult education instruments.

MILLER: Okay. And what, it was about 1970 that you went onto the commission?

DAMON: Yes, I went off in '82, so it would be about '71, I think. I served on the commission for not quite twelve years, mainly because I went on in the middle of a calendar year, which would have been my first three-year term.

MILLER: Of a term? Yes. I noticed in one of the newsletters, one of the old newsletters that I read, and it had some mention of your appointment to the commission, and you had said something about at that time that there were fifty adult schools in the state that were accredited up to that point? Or there had been fifty earlier and it had grown to a hundred, or something like that.

DAMON: I don't know what the quotation was, but fifty sounds about right, and it did keep expanding. Not all adult schools in the state are accredited even today, but the number is quite substantial, and I know of no other regional accrediting commission in the country that has done quite what has been done in California. Or I should say California and Hawaii, because Hawaii is also part of the Western Association, and there are adult schools in Hawaii that are accredited by WASC. And one of the plums that adult education administrators

and teachers who are active volunteers for serving on accrediting commissions like to have is a trip to Hawaii.

MILLER: Is a trip to Hawaii. Why not? Why not? [Chuckling] So were there other major issues during the '60s?

DAMON: Well, there have always been issues on adult education funding, and—

MILLER: Why don't we kind of go to funding, you know, which of course spans time. You mentioned that when you started in Los Gatos in the '50s that the revenue was exactly the same as it was for the high school, that adult ed revenue was the same as the high school revenue.

DAMON: Yes, on a . . . when broken down into a per-hour basis or per-unit-of-a.d.a.-basis; recognizing, of course, that it takes one more hour of attendance for a high school unit of a.d.a. than it does for an adult school. Adult school is on a three-hour day and high school is on a four-hour day.

MILLER: Three hour and four, mm-hmm.

DAMON: But each unit of a.d.a. brought in the same amount, and of course that was an encouragement for districts to run low-cost adult education programs. Teachers' pay was very rarely on a par with the high school day teacher, so it cost less to run an adult education program; but the district could make money by doing so, and that was

why programs at times have grown out of proportion and brought criticism.

MILLER: I know that the schools used to be referred to as evening schools, and then eventually more and more classes were offered during the daytime and they were just adult schools, not necessarily evening schools. But before adult school funding was cut, when it was the same as it was in the high school, the high school revenue limit, why weren't more full-time people hired into the adult ed program?

DAMON: I would say partly because there weren't that many full-time positions and opportunities; and also another part of it was that we depended a lot upon people from the community who had skills that would not be found in the ordinary full-time teacher. I'm thinking of vocational classes and . . . where you would hire a practitioner who would come in, in the evening.

As adult education programs grew and gained some facilities for operating in the daytime, the number of full-time teachers did grow, and some districts did offer adult education teachers contracts. In fact, at one time in Palo Alto we had, I think, seven or eight teachers on contracts ranging from three-fifths time to . . . I think we might have had two on full-time. Then, when the funding was cut, shortly—

MILLER: Then that became a real problem, I know.

DAMON: —before Proposition 13, that became a real problem because the money to fund a full-time teacher and all the benefits just was not there.

MILLER: Yes. Can you just kind of generally trace from when adult ed revenues were the same as the high school districts? And then you've mentioned the 10-cent tax, and then when did the first cut in adult ed revenue occur?

DAMON: I think it was in the mid '70s. I would have to do a little digging into some of my reference materials, but shortly before Proposition 13. Proposition 13 came in in 1978, and I think there was some legislation just prior to that, or some circumstance which limited the. . . . The district revenue limits came into being and there were—

MILLER: Did those come in at the same time that the cap, the 5 percent cap, in the early '70s? Is that when the adult revenue limit was established?

DAMON: Whether that occurred at the same time, but it was in that general same time span. Into the early '70s, there were districts that were very strongly promoting adult education, in order to shore up the available funding for other parts of the district activities, other programs.

MILLER: Cash cow. [Chuckling]

DAMON: Yes, that's right.

MILLER: Certainly one thing that happened in the '60s, and it's also connected with funding, was the first Federal Adult Education Act. I mean, now separated. At the time it was a part of ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act], but now as a separate act. How did the impact of that Federal Adult Education Act . . . What was the impact of that act on adult programs in California?

DAMON: Well—

MILLER: Did everyone jump at the chance to apply for the funds?

DAMON: I don't think everybody jumped at the chance all at once, but it wasn't very long until everybody was in the act, so to speak. In Palo Alto we applied for these adult education funds, and they were mainly used to help us in our English as a Second Language program, which at that time we referred to as "English for the Foreign-Born." In our district at least, and in many others, that term has been replaced by "English as a Second Language." It was very helpful and enabled us to buy more materials and hire teachers to . . . or someone to oversee the program and be a separate administrator for it. So I would say as a . . . One of the results of that money in California has been an expansion of programs for English as a Second Language. And

perhaps it's very fortunate that that was available because we have more people needing to learn English than we had thirty years ago.

MILLER: In California the requirements for that act to apply for those funds heavily influenced local programs, in terms of curriculum and methodology, didn't they?

DAMON: Increasingly that came about. Initially, I think we were able to describe what we were doing and fill out the application form to the satisfaction of the Department of Education in Sacramento; and if it wasn't quite right, they'd help us get it approved. We'd meet the deadlines and all.

But I noticed, and particularly in the years . . . well, in the last years that I was in charge of the program in Palo Alto, and in the years since, the program has become much more structured than it was. For instance, initially we didn't give an examination for placement. We had to give some. . . . Maybe not initially, but eventually we had to show some kind of progress and make some other assessments of whether we were succeeding, and I think the curriculum is now much more prescribed than it was. So there have been more requirements for successfully conducting a program, but that now accounts for, I would say, at least half of the state-supported program in the Palo Alto district at least.

MILLER: Yes. There were federal vocational funds that came under various and sundry guises. [Chuckling]

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: And they've changed names a number of times. What was the first of the federal job training programs that you had any experience with?

DAMON: Well, there was a Federal Vocational Education Act which I think went under the name of Smith-Hughes, and that was, I think, always there during the time that I had been a part of adult education. And you made application for those funds through a different office in Sacramento from the Adult Ed Office, and it brought a certain amount of money to the district—not very much, but it was helpful. And we had under that such things as some of our business education programs, typing, shorthand, when we had a shorthand class.

MILLER: [Chuckling] You don't see many of those anymore.

DAMON: You don't see many typing classes anymore; they're now keyboarding. And in the Palo Alto District we've had an aeronautics program, which is still—

MILLER: Still there.

DAMON: Is still there, and a rather unique program because it's not attached to a community college. It is FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] approved, and the participants do not have to work on an A.A.

degree at the same time. They can just work on preparing themselves through the curriculum to pass the FAA Aircraft Mechanics Examination. So that was about the earliest type of state support that I recall.

Then sometime in the '60s, I think it was early '60s, the MDTA, Manpower Development Training Act, started bringing federal vocational funds to school districts. And Palo Alto had such a program. We entered it in a small way and eventually had an MDTA center with some full-time teachers and a full-time administrator. And then, with the change of administrations in Washington, they continued doing about the same thing under the act by the name of CETA, C-E-T-A, and I don't know what the initials stood for, but—

MILLER: I think that was the Comprehensive Employment Training Act.

DAMON: Comprehensive Employment Training Act. And then that became JTPA [Joint Training Partnership Act], *J* standing for Joint, I believe.

MILLER: Yes. Have these . . . okay, not the regular voc ed acts, I mean, not the Smith-Hughes or what's now Perkins or whatever, but these other special job training programs, have you seen those as a help, as a nuisance, did they work? Were they worth the record keeping?

[Chuckling]

DAMON: In general, they have had a mixed bag of success, I think. But speaking . . . or at least from some of the press that some of these programs have received, I would say in my experience with such programs in Palo Alto, they have been quite successful. And one which we had, which ran for some time and was eventually supported by district funds, was one for training medical assistants. We had a program wherein Stanford Hospital was always eager to get anyone who graduated.

[tape turned off]

MILLER: Okay, we were talking about funding, and certainly the big jolt in funding for adult ed came in the '70s with the passage of Proposition 13, and that also recalls some programmatic curtailment. [Chuckling] Dredge up those dreadful memories of Proposition 13 and how your district responded to it.

DAMON: Well, Proposition 13 really had a great effect on our program. It cut it almost in half. We had a number of classes that would not fit the categories that were acceptable under Proposition 13, and I would say that we immediately recast our summer program after the passage of Proposition 13 and were unable to offer all that we had really planned on at that time. And during the year that followed, we had a drop-off of at least 50 percent, measured in terms of a.d.a., for

funded classes. And some of the classes which were not eligible for a.d.a., like foreign languages and—

MILLER: There's literature and writing courses.

DAMON: Well, those continued, but with fairly substantial fees, which people were not used to at that time, and it has had the effect of giving us a much smaller program than we originally had. So it did cut down on the size of the program very substantially, and it gave the curriculum a new direction because vocational classes and parent education classes, English as a second language, then constituted the large part of our program. And the . . . well, it's probably the non-apportionable classes, . . . that type of class may have constituted half or 60 percent of our prior program, it shrunk to probably 15 percent.

MILLER: Yes, and particularly in a well-educated community like Palo Alto, there would have been a big draw for the writing and the literature and the languages and the humanities, various kinds of humanities courses.

DAMON: We were able to offer somewhat more classes of that type than some of the other districts were able to because we did have some people who were willing to pay for them.

MILLER: Adult schools used to be able to offer what were called forums. Had Palo Alto run forums?

DAMON: Yes, we had run forums before, and that was a means of offering a class where you didn't have a credentialed teacher but you could present a forum program, bring in someone who was distinguished or didn't happen to have an adult ed credential. You could run up to four sessions and pay that person as if that person were a certificated individual. And we didn't have a lot of them, but. . . .

I think there were two terms that were used. There was a forum and there was also a lecture series, and we did more in the line of lecture series than we did with forums, but I recall we had one with local authors and artists in which the creator of "Peanuts," Charles Schultz, appeared, and some others who were prominent at that time were on the lecture and we filled the auditorium.

We also had a few travel programs. I recall that we had a young couple who frequently visited Africa. They were willing to come down, and we'd offer a four-section lecture series in the wintertime; and it turned out to be a very interesting and informative program and they spoke with some authority.

MILLER: Really true enrichment programs.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: More along . . . I don't know, the lifelong learning in contrast to the adult education, which I tend to think of as basic ed, but things that really enrich people's lives.

DAMON: Well, these were enrichment classes and quite successful.

MILLER: Yes. The '70s also brought us a wonderful organization, the RAVE Councils, RAVEC. What can you tell us about those? Regional Adult and Vocational Education Councils, yes.

DAMON: Regional Adult and Vocational Education Council. And these were to be made up of representatives from the high school districts and the community college districts in which they were a part, and we were to sort of delineate our various functions.

MILLER: Again. [Chuckling]

DAMON: Again. In retrospect, I feel that in my district we had a better relationship with our community college before this occurred than we did afterwards.

MILLER: Your community college district had a very aggressive administrator during that period of time.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: [Chuckling]

DAMON: I don't—

- MILLER: Did your council cover all of Santa Clara County? Or was it just your—
- DAMON: No, it just covered the Foothill Community College District.
- MILLER: Foothill Community College District, yeah.
- DAMON: It met as it was required to, and we discussed our various problems, but prior to that it seemed to me we had a much more cordial relationship. In fact, the administrators of our three high school districts would sometimes be invited up to Foothill, and we'd have lunch in the dining room and talk about our various programs and share information, and it seemed to me that life was much more cordial before we were put into a state-required system.
- MILLER: Before it became legal.
- DAMON: And I guess that too has passed. At least I don't hear very much about such problems from my successor.
- MILLER: Well, I think that certainly as far as the RAVE Councils were concerned, they died with Prop. 13 because their funding was removed, and I think that just as you had an informal arrangement before them, that informal arrangements have continued in most places throughout the state since then. Were there other things during the '70s that . . . on the local scene—or state scene, I should say?

DAMON: I would say this continued to be a growth period for accreditation of adult schools. There seemed to be an eagerness on the part of many adult schools to become accredited. And I'm trying to think of what else happened during that period.

Of course, we came into a situation where there was a cap on growth, which was a bit frustrating, because while the adult schools had a cap, the community college did not. And this was particularly hard on adult schools that had a very low a.d.a. But if they had an a.d.a. of 100, a 5 percent or a 2 percent cap gave us only an extra 2 to 5 units of a.d.a.

MILLER: Yes, which was not very much.

DAMON: Or maybe 25 units if you had a larger program.

MILLER: Actually, there were another series of hearings in the late '70s also: the Behr Commission.

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: On basically discussing delineation of function between the colleges and the adult schools. Let's move on, Tom, to some of your professional activities because these have been a very important part of your career in adult education, and certainly where you have made some major, major contributions because you've had many leadership positions. Let's start with just kind of an overall general discussion on

the professional organizations, in terms of what you see as their role or their major contributions to the field of adult ed.

DAMON: Well, I think that they have helped to make adult education into a really professional segment of education. I think they have helped in the survival of adult education in California, and—

MILLER: Enlarge on that a little bit, in terms of helping with the survival.

DAMON: Well, I think had it not been for organizations like the California Association of Adult Education Administrators and ACSA, that adult education might have just been eliminated during some of the hearings . . . in the aftermath of some of the legislation like Proposition 13. In fact, I think it was due largely to the presence of the president of the California Council [for Adult Education], CCAE [Marilyn Matthews], and the person who was at that time the chairman of the ACSA Adult Ed Committee that as much survived for apportionment in adult ed as did survive. I think they rescued adult ed. And the ACSA person was, I believe, Jean Estes, and I don't recall who—

MILLER: Lee Clark.

DAMON: Lee Clark was—

MILLER: It might have been the change. They may have been changing over then.

DAMON: Well, Jean Estes followed me, and Lee Clark, I think, followed Jean Estes, but those individuals certainly helped to keep adult education alive in California.

And I think also at the federal level, the national level, NAPCAE [National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education, pronounced NAP-CEE] has been the spokesman in Washington for any legislation that resulted in monies for basic education and English as a second language monies flowing from Washington to the local districts.

MILLER: One of the first memories I have of you [Chuckling] is encouraging NAPCAE membership. I'm sure that at the very first meeting that I went to as an adult educator that you were there encouraging us to join NAPCAE.

DAMON: I think my favorite line was, "It's your voice in Washington; and if you're not a member, you ought to be." I recall one of my predecessors, and I guess you'd have to say that this man was kind of a mentor, this was Ted Goldman of San Francisco. I think it was he who first proposed my name as a part of the NAPCAE Board of Directors. That was shortly after I came to Palo Alto, and it would have been in the middle '60s sometime. But he used to speak about NAPCAE, his favorite organization, and he did become president of

NAPCAE. He was, unfortunately, killed in an automobile accident during the height of his career.

MILLER: That's always hard to [take]. California has offered a lot of national leadership to NAPCAE and AAACE [pronounced triple A-C-E] which followed it. Why don't you just kind of give us a rundown of Californians and their contributions to the national level, and if there's anything about the national conferences out here that you might want to say something about?

DAMON: Well, our national organization that [historically] relates directly to adult education most directly has been the National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education. Although there was a name change, it was originally founded as the National Association for Public School Adult Education, NAPSAE; and to be more inclusive and to include the community colleges, they changed it to NAPCAE.

MILLER: Yes.

DAMON: And I think the very first president of that group was Manfred Evans when he was Assistant Superintendent for Adult Education in the Los Angeles District. And I don't have the years here, but one of his successors was Ted Goldman.

MILLER: The man from San Francisco.

DAMON: From San Francisco. And then there were two others from Los Angeles—in fact, three others through the years. There was J. Richard Smith, Dick Smith, who was Assistant Superintendent for Adult Ed there for awhile. Then there was a [Los Angeles] principal whose name I can't think of at the moment [Bob Schenz], who was the president in the early '60s. And then there was Jud [Judson] Bradshaw from San Diego. There was Ray [Raymond T.] McCall, who was from San Jose, who served as president of a great many organizations in California, CCAE and CAAEA, and then finally NAPCAE. And then I served in that role in 1979 and '80.

MILLER: When was NAPCAE organized?

DAMON: NAPCAE was organized about 1952-53.

MILLER: So, in point of fact, California really dominated the leadership in its early years.

DAMON: In its early years, and I think all of us served on the board before becoming active in the . . . as president. In '79-80, I think my year was '78-79, and I was followed by Bob [Robert] Rupert of Los Angeles in 1979-80, and I guess he was the last Californian to serve in that position.

NAPCAE became . . . it merged with another organization, the Adult Education Association of the USA [AEAUSA], which was

more oriented toward the practitioners and the professors and the colleges around the country. And in 19 . . . I guess it was about '81, '82 [1982-83], they merged to form the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, AAACE. And I know that we've had at least one board member—that was Lynda Smith of Sacramento—and there may have been one or two other board members whose names I can't recall. [Dr. Smith served two nonconsecutive terms on the board.]

MILLER: Jane Zinner.

DAMON: Jane Zinner. But we've had no one as president of the new organization. But California did play a very prominent part in the formative years of NAPCAE—in fact, through NAPCAE's history—and I was fortunate to be a part of that. I served several years on the board of directors. I served two or three years as secretary-treasurer, and then president-elect and president, which was a very interesting time, and I still go frequently to national conferences and happy to know a number of people there. And this has expanded my outlook on adult education throughout the United States and into some foreign spheres as well.

MILLER: You've been very active in that international group of AAACE.

DAMON: AAACE has a . . . well, NAPCAE had an international component, and I was chairman of the International Committee of NAPCAE, and I then became involved with the International Committee and the Educational Tours Committee of AAACE, all of which has been a very interesting opportunity to meet and get to know people in other parts of the world.

MILLER: As well as provide some very interesting trips for us. [Chuckling] I want to go back a little bit, in terms of California history, and talk about the California Association for Adult Education Administrators, CAAEA, and this was the forerunner to ACSA.

DAMON: Yes.

[tape turned off]

MILLER: Now, was CAAEA in existence when you came into adult ed—

DAMON: Yes.

MILLER: Or was that also organized—

DAMON: No, it had been in existence for some time. And I don't know what its earliest year was but it had. . . . I think it dates back to the . . . at least through the 1930s.

MILLER: Okay, so it had, yes, quite a long time before then. Talk a little bit about the transition to ACSA and. . . . Well, one of the things, though, I wanted to ask you something about this CAAEA. . . . You

issued a series of research reports, and that's something that our professional organizations don't do anymore. Could you tell me just a little bit about those reports and how the topics were determined and who wrote them and that kind of thing? Or did you write all of them? [Chuckling]

DAMON: Well, we had a Research Committee, and I guess I got onto that because when I came into some . . . into a part of the board on CAAEA, I did so, having worked. . . . Well, I'd been to the Bureau of Adult Education. Would you just excuse me, I'll put the cat out.

[tape turned off]

I had been to the Bureau of Adult Education and I had finished my doctoral dissertation, so doing adult education research was rather interesting. And I had had a number of contacts over the state with various school districts with adult education programs, and I had an interest in sending out questionnaires and tabulating the results, and so I proposed some topics, which were accepted. And some of these dealt with the career of adult education administrators, where they came from, where they went after service as adult education administrators, and also to some extent, the composition of adult education student bodies. So that was rather interesting. And the topics I tended to choose. Sometimes I had people who would help

me, but usually I'd propose those to the board of directors and then go ahead with it.

MILLER: Did anyone else write any of these?

DAMON: The ones that I was responsible for, I did—

MILLER: Pretty much by yourself.

DAMON: Did most of the final writing.

MILLER: Okay. Okay, what about the transition to ACSA? Was there much resistance? And do you think anything was lost by going into the umbrella organization, or did we benefit from that?

DAMON: I think there was some concern in going into ACSA, but I think there was also the concern that we did not have the funds, the money, to really run a first-class organization by ourselves. We needed a situation in which there would be some paid staff. The old CAAEA really existed without the benefit of an executive secretary, without the benefit of a headquarters office, and what you had in the way of record keeping and finances resided with a treasurer who would be in one part of the state, the secretary would be someplace else, and the president would move around every year. And then there was also the problem of promoting legislation and traveling to Sacramento. We didn't have the money for affording those costs.

We had joined a kind of consortium with the other two administrative organizations, the secondary administrators and the superintendents' organization, in sharing legislative information and cooperating on some items. So that made it seem logical that we probably should go into an umbrella organization, both for our survival legislatively and also financially.

There was a concern that we might get lost because we had a very small size compared to the others, but I think it soon developed that in terms of legislation we were much more active than some of the other segments, some of the other groups. And we did have, I believe, an influence much greater than our small size would have led one to expect. Even after we were into it, I think there were some people who thought that we shouldn't have gone into a larger organization, that we would get lost and that probably we had sacrificed a few things; but personally I think it has worked out very well, and it was probably the only way that we realistically could have gone.

MILLER: Could have gone on. And then you continued leadership roles under ACSA.

DAMON: Yes, at that time I was concerned about being. . . . Well, I had just been named the adult education representative on the accrediting

commission, and I expressed concern to Bob Rupert, who was the first chairman of the ACSA Adult Ed Committee, that I wanted to have some kind of role that I could transfer into continuing on the commission. And I don't know quite how it happened, but I became the committee member—

MILLER: He gave you a role. [Chuckling]

DAMON: Well, I became the committee member from Region 8, which is Santa Clara County, on the ACSA Adult Ed Committee. And then, I guess, after the first year I became the assistant chairman. Bob's term was only two years because we drew. . . . Each chairmanship drew out of a hat for the length of his term, and Bob drew a two-year term, and I succeeded Bob Rupert as chairman of the ACSA Adult Ed Committee. I had a three-year term, and by the time the third year came around, I was very happy to have that my final year.

MILLER: To pass it on. [Chuckling] But you started the annual fall workshop during that time.

DAMON: Yes, and initially. . . .

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

MILLER: Okay, Tom, we were talking about the workshop which you got started.

DAMON: Initially we were asked to have any meetings of our own in connection with the annual state conference, that they wanted to build a cohesive organization, and we weren't permitted to have a separate conference. We had had an annual conference every year in the fall, but by the third year, and my first year—I think it was my first year as president or as chairman—we were allowed to have a workshop. We didn't call it a conference.

MILLER: And so that's why it's called a workshop. [Chuckling] Okay.

DAMON: So we had a fall workshop, and that was decided upon at our last spring meeting. And there wasn't much opportunity to organize it over the summer, so the task of organizing it and putting it together that year pretty much fell to me. And I recall that I was traveling in Mexico with my family that summer and I was carrying some plans and notes on what I hoped to do at that conference around in my pocket, and I'd work on them at odd moments. And when I got back we put that out as a program, and it drew a pretty good attendance and continued from there.

I believe this was in my first year as chairman. I'd have to look back as to dates, but at least the first and second program, if not the third one, was organized while I was chairman of the ACSA Adult Ed Committee. I think on at least two of these occasions we met at the

Hilton Inn at the San Francisco Airport, and I think another one we had in Southern California, and it has been successful enough so that it has still continued.

MILLER: Yes, very good. Not exactly in the area of professional activities, but sort of, you taught some extension classes in adult ed as well.

DAMON: Yes, I taught some methods and materials classes, first for the University of California Extension Service out of Berkeley and then for San Jose State. The UC classes were conducted mostly out of the area. I recall going for two or three years in a row down to Modesto to conduct a class, and the local classes out of San Jose State were conducted in this area. I recall one year doing it at Del Mar High School in the Campbell School District near San Jose, and I guess there were one or two other locations that I conducted these methods and materials classes.

MILLER: Have you seen problems with teacher preparation and credentialing programs in California? Are you satisfied with them? Or what's your assessment of those?

DAMON: I think they have become a little more complicated than they were when I was involved in it. I was involved in teacher credentialing. I think it's desirable to give teachers some background on adult education and what they are, the field that they are working in. I

think that credentialing has become somewhat more complicated, requires more steps, and one of the interesting things is that while there's virtually no requirements for authorization to teach in a community college now, adult education teachers, whether they're teaching on a state apportionment class or whether they're teaching a class funded by fees, have to have these credential backgrounds.

**MILLER:** Well, actually, they've given up on the fee teachers. They don't have to have credentials anymore; although I think most of the schools are still hiring credentialed teachers in those positions.

**DAMON:** Well, when I left Palo Alto our district was requiring all of our teachers to have credentials.

**MILLER:** Your district wanted them to have it, yes.

**DAMON:** And I think that's still the case. And they seem interested in doing it, but it's become infinitely more expensive. In fact, I think the credential fee is \$40 or more now.

**MILLER:** Oh, it's more than that now.

**DAMON:** I recall initially when I came into the field the state credential was \$4.

**MILLER:** [Chuckling] Okay, I want your ideas on staff development. What kind of staff development was available when you entered the field in the '50s? And I think I've already asked you where you went for help, and you told me you pretty much talked to your neighbors, but was

there any kind of organized staff development for either administrators or teachers in the '50s and '60s?

DAMON: There were some things organized by the State Department of Education. I recall there was either an annual or a biennial workshop or summer program, referred to as the Santa Barbara Workshop, conducted at the Montecito School for Girls, which they took over in the summertime. I think this was sponsored jointly by the State Department of Education; the Bureau of Adult Education Office; the California Council for Adult Education might have had something to do with it; and the credit authorizing agency, I think, was California Western University, which subsequently became United States International University.

MILLER: When they started offering courses in Baja, California. [Chuckling] Okay, go ahead.

DAMON: I think there was some attempt to encourage . . . well, teachers were encouraged to take extension classes in their field, and I think there were some things available in parent education as well as credential renewal courses as such. I don't think there was the emphasis on staff development that there is today. We tried to do some things, in Palo Alto at least, at our annual . . . well, annual or semiannual teachers'

meetings. I would try to organize a back-to-school teacher meeting so teachers could get to know each other.

MILLER: I think we're about ready to wind up here. Are there specific things that we haven't covered that we jogged your memory on anything?

DAMON: I would say that in my experience I feel I was very fortunate to have gotten into adult education. And I feel that for most of my career, in Palo Alto particularly, I felt I had the best job in the school district, partly because as I ascertained the various levels of pay, I felt I was well-paid and I had a great many opportunities to engage in other professional activities, which have been mentioned here—CCAIE, ACSA, NAPCAE, the accrediting commission. And I think I covered my responsibilities in the district, but I also . . . that was because I had a good staff and a district that was willing to let me be away on such assignments. I think it was a very interesting career, and I'm not sure it could be duplicated today in the same way, but I felt very fortunate to have served most of my professional career in the field of adult education.

MILLER: As you look back over that career, Tom, what do you think has been the driving force of adult education in California? Who or what made things happen?

DAMON: I think a lot of it came from the leadership in professional organizations that kept the adult education afloat, and I think that in various ways we've had some leadership in the State Department of Education that has been sympathetic towards adult education and felt that that is a necessary component of education. And I think also that adult education has become much more acceptable, much more recognized as something we need to have—lifelong learning—and much more recognized in the public mind.

MILLER: Can you identify any one or two things that you have found most rewarding about your career?

DAMON: Well, one, that I was able to meet people from other parts of the country, other parts of the world. And also, I think that being able to see some of the things that come about in people's lives as a result of adult education, that parents of children come together in parent education classes and share some of their problems and realize that they're not alone; and at the other end of the spectrum, that we do provide some things of interest to adults who are at the . . . well, their senior years, and help them to maintain some interests in life. And I think also where we bring someone into a position where they can find employment as a result of something that they've done through

adult education, able to have a high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate as a result of participation in adult education.

These are all things that I think have improved people's lives. And in my present situation where I do give some GED tests once in a while, it's rather rewarding to see a person who has dropped out of high school a few years back and come with some trepidation to taking a test and find that they did much better than they expected to, and they go away with a GED certificate and a high school diploma, equivalency certificate issued by the state.

MILLER: Yes, that is very rewarding. Anything else?

DAMON: Well, not that I think of at the moment.

MILLER: Okay. Thank you very much. I think you've certainly had a rich career, and I want to thank you both for the interview and for the contributions that you've made to California adult education.

This interview was completed as a part of the California Adult Education Oral History Project.

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**THOMAS F. DAMON**  
(415) 941-0592  
12660 Roble Ladera Road  
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

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## **QUALIFICATIONS**

A broad knowledge of adult education in the United States derived from 28 years of experience as a professional adult educator, including:

- local school district administration
- state department of education consultant
- university extension teaching
- state and national professional association leadership
- extensive involvement in school evaluation and accreditation

## **EDUCATION**

A.B. Whitman College (Walla Walla, Washington), 1944, English

M.A. Stanford University, 1948, Education

Ed.D. Stanford University, 1957, School Administration (adult education dissertation topic)

Post-doctoral study in junior college administration and higher education, Stanford University, 1964-65

## **PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT**

1967 - 1982 Director of Adult Education, Palo Alto Unified School District, Palo Alto, California

1958 - 1967 Principal, Cubberly Adult School, Palo Alto, California

1957 - 1958 Consultant, Bureau of Adult Education, California State Department of Education, Sacramento, California

1954 - 1957 Principal, Los Gatos Evening High School, Los Gatos, California

Instructor of classes in principles, methods, and materials of adult education for teachers of adults, University of California Extension and San Jose State University Extension, 1959 -1970

Part-time consultant in adult and vocational education, Santa Clara County Office of Education, San Jose, California, 1966 - 1969

## MAJOR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Palo Alto Unified School District. Administrator of a long-established community adult education program that enrolls approximately 8,000 people per year in a community of 60,000. Program includes English as a second language, vocational classes, adult basic education classes, parent education, and a variety of general interest classes operating day and evening in approximately 20 community locations.

National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education (NAPCAE). 1978 - 79 President. I also served on the NAPCAE Board of Directors and as Secretary-Treasurer. Instituted a leadership training workshop for officers of affiliate organizations during my year a president. Served as chair of the International Unit 1982 - 92.

Association of California School Administrators. In California, this single association serves all levels of administrators in public education. The special interests of adult education administrators are served by the ACSA Adult Education Committee on which I served for five years, including three years as chairman (1973 - 1976). This committee works with the ACSA Legislative Office and the State Department of Education, sponsors and annual fall workshop (instituted during my chairmanship), participates in two state association conferences and schedules three or four day-long business meetings each year. In addition to my ACSA Adult Education Committee service, I also served on ad hoc committees on school finance, national affiliations, and the Research and Accreditation Committee.

Western Association of Schools and Colleges. This is the regional accrediting association for educational institutions in California, Hawaii, Guam, U.S. Pacific territories, and American schools in the Far East. Included among its accredited schools are more than 100 separately organized adult schools. I played a leading role in the development of this accreditation process for adult schools and in the preparation of the self-study instruments that are used in preparing for accreditation. I served as a member or chairman of several visiting committees. In 1974 and 1976, I was sent to Japan and Korea on accreditation visits for high school diploma programs on U.S. military bases. I served as commissioner on the 21 member Accrediting Commission for Schools from 1971 - 1982, and for six years represented the schools commission on the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities. I was a member of the WASC Board of Directors.

National Study of School Evaluation. I served as one of three WASC representatives on the 25 member General Committee of NSSE, which promotes research in the field of school evaluation and publishes accreditation instruments that are widely used in the public schools of the U.S.

#### COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

I was a member of the Board of Directors of the Senior Coordinating Council that developed a multi-purpose senior adult center by raising \$1 million in private contributions for renovation of a city-owned building in Palo Alto. Its program includes many educational activities for seniors. I am also a past-president for Neighbors Abroad, the community organization for Palo Alto's sister city relationships with Oaxaca, Mexico; Palo, Philippines; and Enshcdc, The Netherlands. I am also a former president of the Peninsula Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto and an elder in Covenant United Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto.

#### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, formerly the National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education  
Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.  
Association of California School Administrators  
California Council for Adult Education  
Phi Delta Kappa

#### WRITINGS AND PUBLICATIONS

"The Effectiveness of Various Practices in Disseminating Information about Public School Adult Education in California", Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1957.

Teaching and Administrative Personnel in Adult Education, Supplementary Research Report Number 8, California Teachers Association, 1960.

A Study of the Position of the Adult Education Administrator, Report of a Special Research Committee, California Association of Adult Education Administrators, 1967.

"A Look at Adult Education in the Seventies", Administrators' Swap Shop, National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education, April 1972.

"Adult Education in California - - Status Report", ACSA Special Report, Association of California School Administrators, Vol.1, No. 4, 1972.

"Adult Education Up-Date", ACSA Special Report, Association of California School Administrators, Vol. 3, No. 12, 1974.

"Adult Education Status Report", ACSA Special Report, Association of California School Administrators, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1976.

"Adult School Accreditation", You May Be Interested, a publication of the Accrediting Commission for Schools of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, October 1978.

Magazine Articles published in Adult Education, California Parent-Teacher, CTA Journal, Journal of Secondary Education, and Scholastic Teacher.

Editor, California Adult Education Newsletter, Association of California School Administrators, quarterly issues, 1976 - 1978.

#### **PERSONAL AND FAMILY**

Born November 18, 1921, Sunnyside, Washington; Weight 180; Height 5' 10 1/2"; married; two adult children; wife, Rosemary, is a CPA and a retired accounting instructor at Canada College, Redwood City, California.

#### **MILITARY SERVICE**

U.S. Army, 1943 - 1946, Signal Corps, European Theater of Operations.

#### **OTHER INTERESTS**

Photography, stamp collecting, travel (USA, Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Western Europe, Greece, Turkey, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong)

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL LISTING**

Who's Who in the West. Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 14th, 15th, and 16th Editions.

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PLACE Los Altos Hills, CA

DATE December 8, 1994

Thomas E. Damon  
(Interviewee)

Cuba Zell Miller  
(Interviewer)  
(for California Adult Education  
Oral History Project)