From the desk of
SAMUEL C. McCULLOCH

7/12/90

Dear Sharon,

Here is Prof. Henry Corl's letter—typed out at CSU Fullerton.

This letter is his official interview.

Cheers,

Sam
May 11, 1990

Professor Samuel C. McCulloch  
UCI Historian  
Department of History, UCI

Dear Sam:

As I think back upon our interview of this morning, I sense that I was not very felicitous in some of my phrasing in response to your questions about UCI history. And I also left some things out that I would now like to add. So please permit me to give you an interview response that has been re-thought and re-phrased. It should be placed in your files to replace the material that was taped this morning.

You began the interview with asking me about my impressions of changes at UCI since our first interview in 1974. I indicated that since I had retired ten years ago and had been, at best, an outside observer since 1980, that I could not say anything very significant about all the massive changes that had been occurring during the last decade. I do feel that a very significant change has occurred in the relationship of UCI with the surrounding Orange County community. Whether or not this now-emerging embrace of the university by Orange County business and professional interests will be fully to the intellectual advantage of UCI remains to be seen. One stellar aspect of this new era is certainly the presence now on campus of the new professional journal, edited by several
of our History colleagues and several at California State University, Fullerton, that stresses Orange County history and ongoing development. This aspect of that new relationship will, I am sure, not be open to criticisms of being too pliant in relationship to various social and economic forces that have their own interests primarily at heart and would consider those of the university only as secondary.

You then asked my impressions of changes in the History Department itself since 1974. In response, I recalled that we numbered about a dozen professors in 1974 and that we had now more than doubled in size. We had all advanced in age as well. The visionary militants among our faculty, who had undertaken to reorient the History curriculum toward socio-intellectual goals consonant with the upheavals of the late Vietnam era, are now well into middle age; they are now outnumbered two to one by younger faculty, many of whom have been recruited in the last five years. These changes are evident in curricular changes as well. The great intellectual fashion among our younger colleagues in the early 1970s were all the perceived sins of the ESTABLISHMENT—you and I included. Old courses were abolished and a new integrated course for all majors was instituted that emphasized in a universal (Europe and America) sense the problems of capitalism, the visions of Marxism—Leninism, the worries of alienation, and various other current concerns. That has all been changing, as younger minds and older trends
assert themselves. Over the past five years more factual and analytical research in social history has tended to push current politics into the background. History is coming into its own again.

I can take a kind of personal satisfaction in one curricular reassertion. Back in 1964, Arthur Marder was the one to press for a general requirement that all students take a course in Far Eastern History. That fell by the wayside before classes opened in September 1965. But our History curriculum preserved the essence of that concern. By the second year we were offering four alternative year-long courses in American, European, Far Eastern, Latin American history (with emphasis on intellectual-cultural aspects) and one in History of Science. We required each major to take one "outside" course in addition to either European or American history. Thus we began twenty-five years ago with our concern for the Pacific Rim and the Third World. As of today, UCI at last is turning fully to embrace that concept.

I also recall how very much our initial faculty was concerned with effective teaching and availability of themselves to students. Since then, of course, "publish or perish" has taken us over, though a couple of our oldsters still preserve their own commitment. I just went down the hall, checking out the professors' door cards. About a fourth of these professors are
available to students one hour per week; the rest vary between one and one-half and two hours weekly. Only your card adds, "and by appointment." Enough said.

You then asked me my impressions of administrative changes generally. Again I pleaded ignorance, innocence and bias. But I did venture one comment, based on my experience as a continuing member of the University Club Board and general observation. That was the fact of the ever-growing and ever-more-complicating university bureaucracy. From my view as a Board member, it was a question of more and more difficulties in reaching people, in finding people properly informed or properly concerned, in getting decisions, in getting things done betimes, and (above all) in getting the work or the materials or the service done at costs and quality competitive with off-campus suppliers and servicers.

I mentioned another example of administrative change that has me astounded. Our historians have just completed an enormously complicated job of recruiting a "superstar." I asked several of my younger colleagues about the logic of paying a very high price for a professor, most of whose career was already behind him. Should we not focus on someone with more productive years still at his command? The response was that that was not the operative factor. The operative factor was for HISTORY to have a "superstar" who could represent us effectively in that new emerging
administrative configuration--where the "superstars" as a university group formed the single most influential source of group wisdom for administration decision-making. Department chairs (they said) were virtual peasants, deans of schools had serious problems in reaching the ears of the academic vice chancellor or chancellor. It was the "superstars" that counted--and now at last we had one!

You then asked me to comment upon the changes in composition of the student body--from 95 percent Caucasian in 1965 to 1990, where Caucasians are now a minority, though a very large one. Again I pleaded innocence and suggested that all the current commentary in the Orange County media would be a much more effective guide to the significance of this change than my off-the-wall observations.

You then asked me about my research and forthcoming publications. I indicated that the Smithsonian Institution Press was doing my book on Airshipmen, Businessmen, and Politics, 1880-1940. This is a group of ten essays dealing with aspects of the political manipulation of technology, as seen in the example of the great rigid airships of the 1920s and 1930s. Later I hope to finish a major work focusing primarily on the political history of the rigid airship in the same era. I have also just completed the lead essay in the manuscript for the second volume of my Collected Works. This essay has been "in the works" for more than fifty years--my entire professional career--a procedure I would not now recommend
to my younger colleagues. Over the past half century I have collected great chunks of evidence relating the catchword, slogan or conception of Drang nach Osten (German push to the east). It is a controversial matter because Slavs insist upon the phenomenon as a historical reality over the last 150 years, whereas the Germans have said (until now) that no such identifiable phenomenon has existed and that it is a foul political weapon used by their enemies against them. Well, I have clearly identified the exact point of origin of the slogan (among Slavs and by Slavs), have traced its growth and further conceptualization in the Slav and western world, and am recommending to the German historians that they recognize this complicated process for what it is and come to grips with it—in consonance with their Slav colleagues.

Finally, you asked me if I had any suggestions to make about your ongoing work with the UCI history. I suggested that I thought your interviews might profit—and better thus assist you—from the following procedure:

Could you not take a limited and discrete part of your developing history and now write it up in rough draft of ten or fifteen pages, showing how you dealt with material and how the contributions of your interviewees worked into that historical product? My suggested segments included:
UC thinking about university expansion (Master Plan, etc.), 1955-1960; or

Selecting Irvine as a site, 1959-61. Interaction of Orange County people like Joan Irvine, Walter Burroughs, etc. with UC officialdom and Irvine Company to achieve the final outcome; or

The first two years of UCI: Aldrich, L. E. Cox, possibly Ed Steinhaus, (and who else?) between 1961 and 1963—what they tried to do, how they did it, and what got done.

I would prefer to see you do the third alternative because it gives you an opportunity to bring in the full flavor of your own perceptions of the milieu as you found it when you came in early 1964. And, of course, I think of yourself as such a good choice as historian because you were so much part and parcel of what went on.

Once you had that ten or fifteen pages in rough draft, you could let your prospective interviewees have a copy to read in advance. They could then quite literally perceive what you were doing and how earlier interviewees had played into the process with their remembered contributions. I believe that as a result your future interviewees would be motivated because they saw that previous
interviewees had been taken very seriously by you in working towards the final produce and that they would then make an even better effort--as I have now--to contribute towards the final important product.

Thanks for the opportunity to talk with you.

Henry Cord Meyer
Professor Emeritus of History