

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Kerry Louis Pourciau

COLLECTION: 4700.0293

IDENTIFICATION: [1951-1994] First African-American SGA president at LSU

INTERVIEWER: Maxine Crump

SERIES: University History – Student Government Association Past Presidents

INTERVIEW DATE(S): June 3, 1993; June 9, 1993; April 2, 1994

FOCUS DATES: 1969-1974

ABSTRACT:

Tape 404

Family background; racially mixed heritage of both parents; importance of religion and education in upbringing; decision to choose LSU; memories of first day on campus; difficulty facing overt racism; attributes open atmosphere at LSU to Vietnam era social unrest; heavy involvement in extracurricular activities; decision to run for SGA presidency; inspired by former successful African-American students; formulates campaign strategy; strong support from traditional bastions of liberal thought on campus; difficulty in governing once elected; hired by U.S. Senator Russell Long; works on Earnest (Dutch) Morial's mayoral campaign; early disillusionment toward politics; influence of Journalism professors at LSU; social life at LSU; member of Harambe (LSU black student union); acknowledges difficulty of darker skinned African-Americans in assimilating into white dominated society; relationship between integration and multiculturalism; success of integration confined to middle class African-Americans; failure of integration to remedy the plight of economically disadvantaged African-Americans; "street blackness" as a sign of African-American identity.

Tape 405

Role models and early inspiration; national media coverage of Pourciau's election to SGA presidency; opinion of black power movement; overall positive attitude of larger Baton Rouge community toward Pourciau's election; usefulness of LSU "connections" in Pourciau's professional career; openness toward integration in Baton Rouge; Pourciau's role as "first black" throughout life; advantage of being educated in an integrated university as opposed to an African-American university; failure of dual racial educational system; success and failures of integration; early political ambition; personal focus shifts toward family and community; work in public relations and the Louisiana Lottery Corporation; adversarial relationship between the media and Bill Clinton; personal support of Bill Clinton; failure of LSU administration to progress with serious racial integration; need to "de-hick" LSU.

Tape 634

Memories of David Duke as student at LSU; overt racism of Duke while student; lack of real radicalism on LSU's campus; used position as SGA president to fight rules imposed on students by the administration; role as mediator between administration and student protesters at Southern University; addresses gathering of LSU student protesters during the Southern University riots; secondary importance of academics during the late 1960s and early 1970s; most important issues during the period; social atmosphere surrounding Vietnam protests; admiration for Chancellor Cecil Taylor; administration approves student bill of rights; conservative attitude of Dean of Women Margaret Jameson and Dean of Student Services James Reddoch; friendly attitude of Dean of Men Arden French; antagonistic relationship between Pourciau and Reddoch; memories of Progressive Students' Alliance; Pourciau's involvement with Harambe; activities and projects of Harambe; Pourciau hired as a member of U.S. Senator Russell Long's staff; brings a more progressive perspective to Senator Long's staff; very few African-Americans working for federal government in Washington D.C. in mid 1970s; influence of Russell Long on Pourciau's professional development; failure of traditional welfare programs; Senator Long's negative attitude toward welfare; works for Bower-Lyman public relations firm in New Orleans; involved in the New Orleans' downtown development district; hired as an economic development official by Baton Rouge mayor Pat Screen; Pourciau becomes press secretary for Earnest Morial's mayoral campaign in New Orleans; importance of ethics throughout professional career; hired by the Louisiana Lottery Corporation as public relations supervisor; professional fulfillment working for the Louisiana Lottery; discusses potential future of his two sons; current generation gap between adults and children; sophistication of children in the 1990s; prevailing negative image of African-American children; widening gap between socio-economic classes; continuing failure of LSU administration to achieve racial equality.

TAPES: 3 (T404, T405, T634)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours, 40 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 128 pages

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: Proper name list, *Reveille* article on Pourciau's death; Major topics list

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