

## **Alice McGrath Interview History**

INTERVIEWER: Michael s. Balter, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Biology, San Jose State University; M.A., Biology, UCLA.

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: McGrath's home, Ventura, California.

Dates: December 27, 28, 1984; January 20, 21, February 8, 9, March 16, 30, 31, 1985.

Time of day, length of sessions, and total number of hours recorded: Interview sessions were conducted during the day and generally lasted one to two hours in length. A total of approximately sixteen and one-half hours of conversation was recorded.

Persons present during interview: McGrath and Balter.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW: Balter prepared for the interview by examining Collection 107 in the UCLA Library, Department of Special Collections. This collection include s papers on the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, McGrath's personal papers including her FBI file, and various secondary sources on the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee.

The interview began with a brief discussion of McGrath's family and their immigration to the United States. McGrath then discussed her life as a political activist in a chronological fashion, with primary emphasis put on her involvement in the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial. This is followed by a discussion of McGrath's career as a teacher of self-defense and coauthor of several books on self-defense.

During the course of the interview, McGrath came upon subjects which she was reluctant to discuss in a document open to the public. Balter made a notation of these subjects, which were discussed during the final taping session. The transcript and tape of the final session are sealed until January 1, 2000.

### EDITING:

Teresa Barnett, editorial assistant, edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

In March 1985 the edited transcript was given to McGrath along with a list of queries and names requiring identification. She returned the approved transcript in April of the same year.

Diane H. Ju, editorial assistant, prepared the front matter and index.

#### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

Also in the UCLA Department of Special Collections is the tape of an interview with Alice McGrath by James Mink and Gerald Nash, completed on June 19, 1981. Topics include McGrath's initial shock at realizing that some of the Sleepy Lagoon defendants were not law-abiding citizens, the limited options available to Chicanos in the forties, the defendants' reactions to McGrath, their lives since acquittal, and Guy Endore's pamphlet on Sleepy Lagoon. The tape was not transcribed because all of these topics are covered comprehensively in the later interview. The 1981 tape does, however, include a limited amount of material which is either absent from the later interview or appears in a different context or with a different emphasis. Most important are McGrath's comments on the significance of the Sleepy Lagoon case, her theories on why the Chicano community hesitated to aid the Sleepy Lagoon defendants, and her statements about Judge Charles Fricke's racism.