Oral history interview with Sidney Lezak, 1988 August 16-1990 June 6

Overview of the Collection

Interviewee: Lezak, Sidney I., 1924-2006
Title: Oral history interview with Sidney Lezak
Dates: 1988 August 16-1990 June 6 (inclusive)
Quantity: .1 cubic feet, (8 audiocassettes (6 hr. 55 min. 25 sec.) + transcript (116 pages))
Collection Number: SR 1220
Summary: Oral history interview with Sidney Lezak conducted by Jack G. Collins from August 16, 1988, to June 6, 1990, as part of the United States District Court Oral History Project. Lezak was an attorney in Portland, Oregon, and U.S. attorney for Oregon from 1961 to 1982.
Repository: Oregon Historical Society, Davies Family Research Library
Davies Family Research Library
Oregon Historical Society
1200 SW Park Avenue
Portland, OR
97205
Telephone: 503-306-5240
Fax: 503-219-2040
libreference@ohs.org
Access Restrictions: Collection is open for research.
Languages: English
Sponsor: This project is supported in whole or part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the State Library of Oregon.

Biographical Note

Sidney I. Lezak was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1924. He attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, for one semester. He then studied at the University of Chicago. In 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, and he served in Europe during World War II. After his discharge in 1945, he returned to the University of Chicago, earning a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1946 and a law degree in 1949. That same year, he and Muriel Deutsch were married; they later had three children. The couple moved to Oregon the night of their wedding. He practiced law in Portland, Oregon, and also served as legal counsel for the Democratic Party of Oregon. He was appointed U.S. attorney for Oregon by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. He resigned in 1982 and worked as a mediator until his death in 2006.

Other Descriptive Information

Oral history interview with Sidney Lezak, 1988 August 16-1990 June 6
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv445281
Content Description

This oral history interview with Sidney Lezak was conducted by Jack G. Collins from August 16, 1988, to June 6, 1990. In this interview, Lezak discusses his family background and early life in Chicago, Illinois. He speaks briefly about beginning his college studies before enlisting in the U.S. Air Force in 1942. He describes flying missions in Europe during World War II. He then briefly talks about completing his studies at the University of Chicago; his marriage to Muriel Deutsch; and relocating to Oregon.

Lezak discusses practicing law in Portland, Oregon. He talks about some of the cases he worked on, particularly regarding labor law and civil rights. He also talks about judges he argued before, including Gus Solomon. He discusses his involvement with the Democratic Party of Oregon, including serving as legal counsel. He then talks about his appointment as U.S. attorney for Oregon and his service in that role from 1961 to 1982. He discusses his work toward making the U.S. attorney’s office non-partisan; working with the FBI and local law enforcement; and some of the cases he prosecuted, including mail fraud. He talks about civil unrest during the Vietnam War, and about prosecuting protesters and conscientious objectors. He talks about judges on the U.S. District Court that he argued before, including William East, Gus Solomon, and John Kilkenny. He also speaks about his staff and law clerks, particularly Kristen Olson, who later became U.S. attorney. He discusses the American Indian Movement in Oregon, including relations with the Warm Springs tribe. Lezak discusses his resignation in 1982 in response to the policies of the Reagan administration. He closes the interview by talking about his activities since leaving office, including his career as a mediator.

Use of the Collection

Alternative Forms Available

Audio and transcript available online in OHS Digital Collections.

Preferred Citation


Restrictions on Use

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Administrative Information

Detailed Description of the Collection

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Transcript of oral history interview with Sidney Lezak</td>
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Names and Subjects

**Subject Terms:**
- Justice, Administration of--Oregon
- Lawyers--Oregon--Portland
- Public prosecutors--Oregon
- Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Public opinion
- World War, 1939-1945--Personal narratives, American

**Personal Names:**
- Lezak, Sidney I., 1924-2006

**Corporate Names:**
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Democratic Party (Or.)
- United States. Attorney (Oregon)

**Form or Genre Terms:**
- interviews

**Other Creators:**

**Personal Names:**
- Collins, Jack G. (Jack Gore), 1930-2010
  (interviewer)