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## A visit with the Mayor of San Francisco, George Moscone

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# PacificReview

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A visit with the  
mayor of San Francisco,  
Class of 1953

## George Moscone



**G**eorge Moscone left his heart in San Francisco.

The 47-year-old mayor of one of the world's great cities has strayed from the land of cable cars and the Golden Gate Bridge for military service, a college education at University of the Pacific, and service in the California State Senate.

Yet he has always returned to the cosmopolitan atmosphere that annually lures thousands of tourists to the city.

Moscone has come a long way from the confines of a spartan dormitory room in North Hall at Pacific to the mayor's office in San Francisco. He was voted to his current position in 1976 and recently came through what amounted to be a recall move by a defeated opponent with a strong vote of confidence from city residents.

Reminders of the recent vote are two framed newspaper stories in his office, one stating he was the winner and the second reporting the demise of his opponents.

The newspapers aren't the only things to be noticed in his second floor office at City Hall in the Civic Center section of San Francisco. There are the traditional flags, some works of arts, a fireplace, a rarely seen curved, wooden door and — mounted high on the richly paneled walls — two special lights for television news conferences.

There is a feeling of informality in the office, with papers and correspondence spread across a large but unpretentious desk. Moscone speaks between sips of coffee from a cup imprinted "Fontanarossa Narcisi," the name of his family's region in Italy. His

affection for San Francisco comes through clearly as he reminisces about his days at Pacific, reflects upon his career in the political arena, and discusses college students in today's society.

"I wanted to go away from home for college, but not too far away from San Francisco," he said. "I loved San Francisco but knew that to grow as a person I would have to leave and see a different part of life."

Moscone was raised in San Francisco and graduated from St. Ignatius High School. His desire for competition, which would surface later and lead him into government service, was channeled into sports. He was named the "Outstanding Prep Basketball Player" in San Francisco and was an All-City selection in 1946-47.

He received a basketball scholarship to come to Pacific, but that wasn't the only factor that influenced him to come to Stockton. "I had several friends who spoke highly of Pacific, and in visiting the campus I was impressed by the beauty, the people, and the general atmosphere. The school was small enough to eliminate my fears of becoming just a number at a large university."

Like many students today, he was uncertain about his career, yet he recognized the value of a basic liberal arts education while majoring in sociology. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1953.

"Whether or not you have a career goal determines the intensity of your study; at least it did for me,"

*continued*



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Michelle Lisa Manos, *Editor and Designer*

Kara Brewer, David Catherman, Laura Diamond, Richard Doty, Susie Gage, Jay Goldberg, Doyle Minden, *Staff Writers*  
Steve Cecil, Jeremy Jones, Steve Minden, Michelle Wells, *Contributors*  
Stefan van Harmelen, Michelle Lisa Manos, *Photography*

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*All's well that ends well: Two framed newspaper stories, one stating he was the winner and the second reporting the demise of his opponents, sit on Mayor George Moscone's fireplace, among other reminders of his extensive political career.*

said Moscone, gesturing frequently with his hands and arms to emphasize a point. "Everything I did was set at my own pace. When I decided on law school later on, my studies there (he graduated near the top of his class from Hastings College of Law in 1956) reflected this."

He also enjoyed the social life that comes with college — "they don't give grades for socializing, but it is an important part of college" — and was president of the Rhizomia fraternity while attending Pacific.

Because Moscone had served in the Navy before enrolling at Pacific, he was somewhat older than many of the students in his class, and this influenced him greatly in defining his values. "It was an unusual time to be on campus in many respects. There was the interaction between the veterans and younger students, the fact that it was a coed campus and I was coming out of the Navy after going to an all boys high school, plus I was from a very urban area and many of the students I met were not."

He remembers Dr. Harold Jacoby among his professors as a person "who took interest and knew me as an individual." Jacoby also remembers Moscone: "Everybody who knew him recognized him as a person of considerable ability," said

Jacoby. "He was an able student and very affable person. Although I would not have predicted that he would enter politics, it doesn't surprise me that he did, and I have followed his career with interest."

In sports at Pacific Moscone played two years of varsity basketball for Coach Chris Kjeldsen, who the mayor referred to as "a marvelous human being." Moscone served mostly as a playmaker on the court, averaging about five points per game and leading the team in assists one year. "The floor leader of the team, George has a nice long shot, and is the team boss, directing all of the plays," said the basketball press guide in referring to him as "the colorful San Francisco player."

Like many aspiring politicians, Moscone got started by working in partisan politics — in his case for the Democratic County Committee in San Francisco. He also was in private practice as a lawyer and taught law courses for five years in the Bay Area.

After service on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for two years he was elected to the State Senate from the 10th District of San Francisco in 1966. He held that office for nine years, winning the first time by the second largest plurality in the state. In 1970 he was re-elected with the largest margin of victory for any legislator in California, and he also received in that year the highest vote total of any candidate on the San Francisco ballot.

During his years in the Legislature he achieved considerable success and praise for his leadership and dedication. He was elected Democratic Floor Leader following his first year in the Senate and was re-elected to this post several times. He also served as chairman of the six-man San Francisco legislative delegation.

Moscone was named "Outstanding Freshman

Senator" in 1967 and "Most Effective Democratic Senator" in 1969 by the Capital Press Corps. He also was honored in 1969 by the California Trial Lawyers Association as "Senator of the Year."

"I like the enormous challenge of representing someone other than myself," said the mayor in describing his interest and fascination with politics. He said that both fields he has followed in his career — the law and government service — address themselves to this task of "speaking for the problems and needs of others. I have asked myself on several occasions why I entered politics, and another reason is that I like competition. This is very important to my character."

In comparing his current duties with those as a State Senator, Moscone said there was more of a direct sense of helping people in the Legislature, and there "you had more time to reflect" about the many divergent needs and problems of society.

He feels there was less bickering in the Senate than what he faces as the mayor. "We had disagreements in the Senate, but I always walked out of there with a feeling of respect for my colleagues and I think they felt the same way toward me. Here some members of the Board of Supervisors (who he must deal with on a regular basis) seem more interested in picking at things than responding to legitimate needs."

With such difficulties in the mayor's job, why would he want to leave the Senate? Moscone indicated the answers rest in his pursuit of challenges and in his desire to return to his home.

"I don't believe public service should be a life-time job. . . I like to stay involved as long as there is a challenge, and after nine years in the Senate the challenge just wasn't there anymore. I could have returned to law practice, stayed in the Senate, or run for another office. This was the challenge I wanted because it gave me the chance to return to my home."

Through his years in college, service on the Education Committee in the Senate, and as mayor of San Francisco, Moscone has continued to be involved in the educational process. He has some definite feelings on how college students have changed since he was on campus.

"Young people today are lovelier than they used to be, but they also are sometimes more evil. I think you could say that they love more and they hate more than when I was in college. By this I mean that they are more concerned than we were about humanitarian causes, yet they also are less tolerant of the imperfections in our society. The world is a lot clearer to them because of the many technological advances. . . We were not a very well informed era because we didn't have things, for example, like television or the degree of investigative reporting that many newspapers have today. The young people today simply have more to hate and more to love."

And Moscone has first-hand information about young people. He and his wife have four children who range in age from 13 to 20.

What does the future hold for George Moscone? "I would like to serve two terms as mayor, as that gives me 20 years of public service. After that I am not really sure. I think there might be another career out there, but I'm not certain what it might be."

One thing my be sure, however, and that is that whatever course he follows won't take George Moscone too far away from San Francisco. — R.D.