

**Janet Gray Hayes:
The Election of San Jose's First Woman Mayor**

**An Essay
Presented to
The California Pioneers
Of Santa Clara County**

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CALIFORNIA PIONEERS



OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

INCORPORATED 1875

FIRST HONORABLE MENTION

Presented to

Kelsey Giambruno

For Outstanding Writing of California History

Presented this 3rd Day of June, 2000

President

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Introduction

Janet Gray Hayes captured the national media attention when she was elected the first woman mayor of a major American city on November 5, 1974. Despite the mixed reactions to her triumph, she strived to maintain growth, unity, and an environmentally safe San Jose for her two mayoral terms. Not only was she a devoted community activist, but she also proclaimed a great concern for the environment. "My horizons as an environmentalist have broadened. I'm an environmentalist, but not a wide-eyed radical environmentalist. For a lot of people, a good environment means food on the table."¹ Mrs. Hayes fought a challenging battle against an equal rival, Bart Collins. Her widespread campaign often focused on ideas that would better suit the people. With two successful mayoral wins in 1974 and 1978, she led San Jose to programs which resulted in a Triple-A Bond rating for the expanding City of San Jose.

Early Life

Janet Gray Frazee was born in 1927 in the church-oriented farming community of Rushville, Indiana. As a young child, she was one of the few girls in her small town and would often play with the boys of her neighborhood. Her free time was spent on her grandparents' farm, riding horses and being a cowgirl. In spite of these favorite past times, Mrs. Hayes once said, "As a child I never thought of myself as a tomboy, although I was. I always loved competition. My heroes were the cowboys in the movies I'd see each Saturday afternoon." ²

After high school Mrs. Hayes attended University of Indiana as a pre-med student. However, she found medicine was not her particular interest and instead pursued a bachelors degree in liberal arts. At graduation she earned Phi Beta Kappa honors. Her college career continued with a full-tuition scholarship to University of Chicago where she met her future husband Kenneth Hayes. In March 1950, not only did she become Mrs. Hayes, but she also got her master's degree in social work.

In 1956, the couple relocated to San Jose as a result of Dr. Hayes taking a position as an internist with Agnew State Hospital. "The couple lived on the hospital grounds until Mrs. Hayes had a run-in with an escaped patient which resulted in them moving to 1155 Emory Street, across the street from the main branch of the San Jose YMCA."³ They fit comfortably into the neighborhood, began their family of four, children and have lived there ever since.

The Road to Community Activism

Mrs. Hayes's road to elected office was made possible by her extensive involvement in community activities dating back to 1958. In that year she was concerned about the lack of traffic signals near Trace Elementary. She confronted the City Council with good intentions of how to improve that city corner, and "left with an everlasting

taste of confidence and power."⁴ On August 26, 1966, Mrs. Hayes was appointed a seat on the San Jose Redevelopment Committee. She had replaced Dr. Arturo Cabrera, who had resigned, and was recommended by the mayor Ron James because the board was in need of her optimistic ideas for downtown. She was the first woman to be a part of the board. In addition, it was the beginning of many firsts as being a woman member of a large organization.

In the late 1960's Mrs. Hayes's social involvement flourished when she joined several Bay Area organizations. She served a two-year term as president of the League of Women Voters with 4,800 members⁵. Her leadership qualities began to emerge in 1969 when her neighborhood was firmly against the idea of the YMCA tearing down a long-standing home across the street. Together the community formed a Rose Garden homeowners association to fight against the YMCA plans. Little did she know at that time that the YMCA Board of Directors represented the power structure of San Jose. After successfully defeating the anticipated board, The YMCA appointed Mrs. Hayes to their board to represent the neighborhood and its surrounding. Mrs. Hayes recalls "they could watch me and I could watch them." ⁶

Although Janet Gray Hayes's life was already busy and stressful, she involved herself with ongoing community activities. In 1956 she was appointed a psychiatric worker for adult and child guidance. As a strong conservationist, she joined the Sierra Club in the late 1960's and has been a lifelong member since then. In the early 1970's she was a short time member of the Calvary Methodist Church Social Active Committee. As a proud parent of four, she never escaped the P.T.A (Parent Teachers Association). Nonetheless, she enjoyed the activities she participated in as the traffic chairman of Trace Elementary School. She was active in the San Jose Business Bank, today referred to as the San Jose National Bank, during the turning point of the 1970's. In 1973 she joined the San Jose's Goals and Housing Committee on a one-time deal. Two thousand people

joined and created goals conference to fulfill a better San Jose. ⁷

An Entrance into San Jose Politics

"Make San Jose Better - Before You Make It Bigger," was a winning campaign slogan for Mrs. Hayes's inauguration into Council Seat 3 in April of 1971. ⁸ Nearly a week before the election, "a 200 volunteer brigade took place on behalf of her campaign along the streets of downtown San Jose." ⁹ She received continuous support from the Conservationists for a Responsible Government because they noted Mrs. Hayes was involved in Save Our Valley Committee and the Sierra Club.

When the election finally took place on April 13, 1971, Mrs. Hayes had a stunning victory. She received more than three times the second leading vote of Larry Silva. She tallied 24, 490 votes, while Silva received merely 7,589, and left Alfredo Garza trailing with 5, 554 votes. However, there were also nine other candidates who were favored between "309 (Hardester) to 2, 954 (Ceglio) votes. " ¹⁰

While a member of the City Council, Mrs. Hayes was elected as the environmentalist, concerned about neighborhoods and the environment. She walked many precincts of San Jose and concluded that a main objective was to clearly draw San Jose's precincts and improve the city's image. In 1973, she was also designated as Vice Mayor by Norman Mineta and for the first time saw the standards of being an effective mayor. Mrs. Hayes's extended involvement with the community and council concluded with three and a half years of improved city funding, maintenance, and environment.

Entering the 1974 Mayoral Election

Initially, Janet Gray Hayes saw no resistance when deciding to run for the mayor of San Jose. However, she was completely unaware of the potential challenge or of the advancing run-off between an equal candidate, Bart Collins. She was accessible, had an

untouchable record, and had the community support. Mrs. Hayes had developed a 14-year reputation for being active in the community. In addition, she considered herself to be better qualified than other candidates, and in a positive and confident state of mind said, "I can do better than any of them." ¹¹ This was the attitude that brought her to victory.

Janet Gray Hayes depended greatly on her family's cooperation and support. However, not the entire family was pleased with the idea of their mother being the center of media attention and politics. John Hayes was the one family member dissatisfied with his mother's intentions to run for mayor. Yet when the family vote was taken, he was the only one opposed, and was thus over-ruled; Mrs. Hayes ran for mayor. Her second daughter was always proud of her mother's success in life and as mayor, but after high school found life fulfilling in Tahoe as a ski instructor. Her dedicated husband Kenneth Hayes not only supported her emotionally, but also financially, throughout the mayoral election and throughout her political career.

Candidates and Their Views

The Election of 1974 contained seven worthy and politically different candidates; most were qualified; however, only two put forth a strenuous fight in the campaign. Bart Collins and Janet Gray Hayes dedicated infinite hours of labor and effort to run a race where in the last hours of the voting, "Mrs. Hayes won by 1.3 per cent. " ¹²

Bart Collins was a sixty-two year old Nevada City native who had lived in San Jose for sixty years; thirty-eight spent dedicated to police duty. Mr. Collins was a retired Chief of Detectives of the San Jose Police Department who was overwhelmingly supported by the Mercury News. Collins graduated from San Jose State College and became the first college graduate to enter the San Jose Police Department. His three main

platform points were:" (1) Unity- to restore faith and pride in the city. (2) Equal protection on the streets and at home. (3) Government leadership, including proper priorities." ¹³ Throughout the campaign Collins received \$26, 918.80, and spent \$23, 653.52. ¹⁴ He used pamphlets, newspaper, and television advertisements to increase his popularity and to continue a battle in the general election.

Alfredo Garza Jr. was a thirty-six year old educator, familiar in the political world because of his two terms on the San Jose City Council. He was first elected in 1971 and again in 1973. Garza had lived in San Jose for twenty-two years and was a graduate of San Jose City College. He had a simple three-point platform: "(1) Better Police and Fire Department, (2) improve transportation and street maintenance, (3) and amend industrial development." ¹⁵ During the 1974 campaign, he received \$22,515.61 and spent \$33, 793.28. ¹⁶ Often the front-runners Collins and Hayes negatively compared him in newspaper advertisements.

Paul A Colvard was a twenty-year-old law enforcement officer who was attending courses at San Jose City College. He was the youngest candidate and this factor affected his race in a harmful fashion. Colvard was rarely taken seriously and was unable to find large supporters. Throughout the campaign he received \$733.64 and spent \$650.¹⁷ The three points of his platform were:"(1) More industry to lower unemployment and taxes, (2) better transportation, (3) and to inform citizens of Mayoral issues." ¹⁸ Although this young man's ideas were fresh and simple, Colvard was a new and unfamiliar face in politics and was destined to fail.

Paul F. Moore was a candidate returning to politics after working as a sales engineer. Moore had lived in San Jose his entire life and was accustomed to the political lifestyle. Mr. Moore had served from 1954-1962 on the City Council and was Mayor of San Jose in 1962. His detailed three-point platform included:" (1) Distinct work between

Council and Mayor (too much overlapping), (2) work to change the charter to provide a full-time mayor, (3) to clean up the downtown mess." ¹⁹ Mr. Moore had not been too liberal on certain issues and that conflicted with the new age residents of San Jose.

Gerald A Robertson was a forty-one year old real estate broker who was experimenting with a new career by attempting a public office without any background or knowledge of politics or campaigning. Robertson's platform of three-points included: "(1) Equal representation through the members by district, (2) fiscal responsibilities and introduction of business principals in city affairs, (3) and development of an industrial base." ²⁰ Gerald Robertson "received and spent \$1,010" while campaigning; however, these contributions were minimal when compared to those of Hayes and Collins. ²¹

Dr. Peter Venuto was a thirty-seven year old business management professor at San Jose University who bounced from being in the mayoral race to withdrawing under circumstances. In both spending and receiving, his finances never prevailed above \$500. ²²

The Seventh Wonder of the Campaign

Janet Gray Hayes's campaign was a publicized event and a frequently raised political topic. Not only was she a woman running for mayor, but San Jose was the fourth largest and fastest growing city in California. However, Mrs. Hayes, her working staff, volunteer supporters, and family were all prepared for the upcoming adventure. She had decided to engage in the competition for mayor when Norman Mineta ran for Congress.

Janet Gray Hayes had an extensive platform that emphasized much change in growth, environmental causes and city image. Mrs. Hayes' three main points were: "(1) healthy economic atmosphere, (2) encourage better land use and planning, (3) openness and responsive leadership on the Council." ²³ There were also several detailed platform statements that she would promise to fulfill if elected mayor. She placed a great emphasis on economic development for a healthier and suitable climate. Mrs. Hayes, being a

life-long lover of the environment, was for quality growth to improve the city image. She would strive for the council to be more professional and full-time, and wished to improve the police-community relationship.

Janet Gray Hayes and Bart Collins were equally respected by much of the San Jose community. Yet that support was not easy to come by. Mrs. Hayes spent many of her weekend afternoons walking San Jose neighborhoods, passing out a seed packet of "Forget Me Not's", and she would never be forgotten. Several of the older communities, containing conservationists, would accept her concept of growth. Environmentalists held a high regard for her because of her genuine intentions and community work with parks, the Sierra club, and support of environmental causes. She had much support from fellow Democrats, liberals, and women all hoping to see a city emerging with women. Altogether Janet Gray Hayes received \$33,465.27 and spent \$27,777.84; many from community supporters.²⁴ The Building and Contractors Committee and Conservationists for Responsible Government gave her a \$6,000 contribution. With a large range of supporters this donation, and many others, resulted in a diverse strength in her campaign. "The Singer House Co. - San Leandro donated \$500, and Frank Bernard gave her \$3,924, while his printing business donated \$1,500."²⁵ In addition she would receive "small donations of \$100 from people who heard her debates and would call in ready to sign up and volunteer their time and money."²⁶

The stress was overwhelming, and the pressure was on. And through this timely election, Mrs. Hayes and her family survived a major crisis. In her hometown of Rushville, Indiana, on January 6, 1973, three high-school dropouts attempted to burglarize Mrs. Hayes's mother's house. However, Lucille and George Hosmer (Mrs. Hayes' mother and stepfather) caught these juveniles in the act. In one shot, Mrs. Hosmer was instantly killed. She was seventy-five. Mr. Hosmer suffered from bullet wounds in his arm and chest. Fortunately, he made it to a neighbor's to call the police. Within a short period of

time "the three youths were arrested and presented before Marion County Grand Jury." ²⁷

A Primary Election

On June 4, 1974, the most commonly pondered question in local political circles was "who will be the next mayor of San Jose?" Through all the debates, volunteer work, time, and pressure of the election, Mrs. Hayes stood patiently and confidently. On election night, with one half of the votes in Hayes was leading by 35 per cent and Collins was slightly behind. Garza on the other hand, along with the other "unknowns" was trailing with 16 per cent. Finally with 511 of 511 precincts in and totaled, Hayes and Collins emerged as the top-two contenders; however, neither had obtained over 50.1 per cent. In fact "Janet Gray Hayes had 35,645 votes, 36.9 per cent of all votes cast. Bart Collins had 32,988 votes and 34.1 per cent. Alfredo Garza received 13,711 votes, 14.2, per cent." ²⁸ In winning the primary, Janet Gray Hayes had been relieved that she was evidently one of the favored candidates in this election. She would now prepare for a secondary election scheduled to take place on November 5, 1974.

The Run-Off Election

Janet Gray Hayes's primary platform was carried over to the one she abided by in the secondary campaign. Once again she emphasized a change in growth, environmental causes and city image. She suggested a Master Plan that would contain an urban service boundary where services are available; an urban transition area, which would develop over time; and an urban reserve area, where there was no development because it was too costly. Promising a healthy economic atmosphere she gained the support of the environmental majority. ²⁹ When she encouraged better land use and planning, the newer residents of San Jose developed an interest in her, along with the conservationists who indeed wanted to see controlled growth in their community grow. Often Mrs. Hayes would boast about the recent additions to the police and fire departments, public works,

and parks departments. The 400 newly-hired employees spread word of her positive state of mind and intentions.³⁰ The minority community and MAPA both concluded that she would be the most beneficial candidate for San Jose. Edmund Mercado stated "her human needs-oriented program scored a favorable impact on the organization."³¹ In addition, she stressed the importance of economical development for a healthier climate that would satisfy the city's needs. In spite of the San Jose Mercury's endorsement for Collins, "Mrs. Hayes still gained support from 1,000 volunteers who went campaigning, and would devote their time and money into the campaign" of Janet Gray Hayes.³²

Bart Collins was running a successful campaign as well. Building Trades of Santa Clara County, the Police Officers Association, Bartenders Union Local # 577, Operating Engineers Local # 3, and the Small Business Association among others were heavily supporting him. In addition, he had the endorsement of the San Jose Mercury News.

Throughout the campaign Mrs. Hayes and Collins would clash head-on about ongoing transportation and development growth in San Jose. The relocation of the San Jose Municipal Airport was a major issue over which each candidate had a different perspective. Bart Collins opposed the relocation, because "relocation would cost half a billion dollars."³³ On the other hand Mrs. Hayes had trouble deciding; first, she approved of it being moved; then later decided she would support it unless heavy traffic proposed a problem. Widening the San Felipe was the second argument Collins and Hayes disputed. Janet Gray Hayes suggested that instead of widening the road, the city should explore a more environmentally healthy mode of transportation, "perhaps a fixed rail 'people-mover.'"³⁴ However, Collins favored widening the road, which would lead to the new Evergreen Junior College. In addition, he opposed developing the Santa Teresa foothills.

"On election night, while the outcome hung in the balance, Mrs. Hayes characterized the campaign as dirty. But reminded of this the next morning in the flush of

victory, she blithely responded, ' Oh, that was last night. Today is a new day.'”³⁵ For Mrs. Hayes it was an event and triumph worth celebrating. She was the first woman in the 197-year-history of San Jose to hold the top office. Hayes was speechless to learn she had won by a 1.3 per cent margin. The race had been hard fought and exhausting from the day it began to the moment she heard of her victory by a slight margin. Janet Gray Hayes had received 65,768 votes, 50.6 per cent of all votes cast. Bart Collins trailed closely with 64,108 votes and 49.3 per cent.³⁶ The journalists and political figures especially liked this story, and dubbed San Jose, “Feminist capital of United States,” because the city was emerging with Mrs. Hayes as well as other prominent women leaders.³⁷

A First Full Day at the Office

It was a Thursday morning, and an unforgettable first day in her office: downtown San Jose, a rescue mission, and luncheon at the Windmill. Mrs. Hayes posed with a former professor at Indiana University for an alumni magazine picture and quickly after, held a half an hour summit meeting with City Manager Ted Tedesco. In addition, she visited three parcels of property that were up for rezoning at the following City Council meeting. She concluded her working hours with a briefing on economic development. It was a somewhat typical day, establishing a pattern in which she would continue for the next eight years.

The Memorable Eight Years in Office

Janet Gray Hayes worked non-stop for the next eight years in the hopes of developing stronger neighborhoods, a safer community, and an economically prosperous San Jose. One of Mrs. Hayes's proud accomplishments was her attendance on the Executive Board of the US Conference of Mayors; the “big city mayors of that time.”³⁸ At her first meeting she set forth a personal vow to bring more women, like herself, into

politics. Mrs. Hayes also had extensive involvement with the board of the National Conference of Cities. There she "served dedicated hours on an environmentalist and technology committee," where she formulated ideas for a healthier and computer--smart city.³⁹

The attention Janet Gray Hayes received as mayor was often flattering and overwhelming; however, her salary was not. At the time she was elected she "received \$600 a month" for her full-time and endless work as mayor.⁴⁰ Even mayors of other cities agreed her job required more money than what was offered. Coincidentally, during the mid 70's, Mayor Hayes had applied for a Master's Card, and her application was rejected. Mrs. Hayes found this disgraceful and brought the rejection letter to the newspapers. Essentially the media articles made the final decision to raise the mayor's paycheck in the charter.

Janet Gray Hayes considered her most memorable accomplishment to be when San Jose received a Triple-A Bond Rating at the end of her eight year mayoral term. Sally Reed was the City Manager and Mrs. Hayes was thankful to have such an informed staff member. Together they faced the challenges brought about by the passage of Proposition 13 that required significant cuts in the city budget.

In Mrs. Hayes's personal opinion, the most challenging experience in her career was attempting to defeat the National Rifle Association.⁴¹ In 1975, Mayor Hayes proposed to put an end to the "Saturday night special." One night at City Hall the NRA made an astonishing appearance. They filled the council chambers, made unruly noise, and made the meeting the most difficult in eight years. The NRA defeated Mrs. Hayes, and this victory was an example of what the NRA will do and fight for.⁴² The second traumatic event which took place during her two terms as mayor were the deaths of two citizens by police officers. One man was an innocent victim of a careless police officer. Where as the second death was to a man who retaliated against the police, and resisted arrest. The

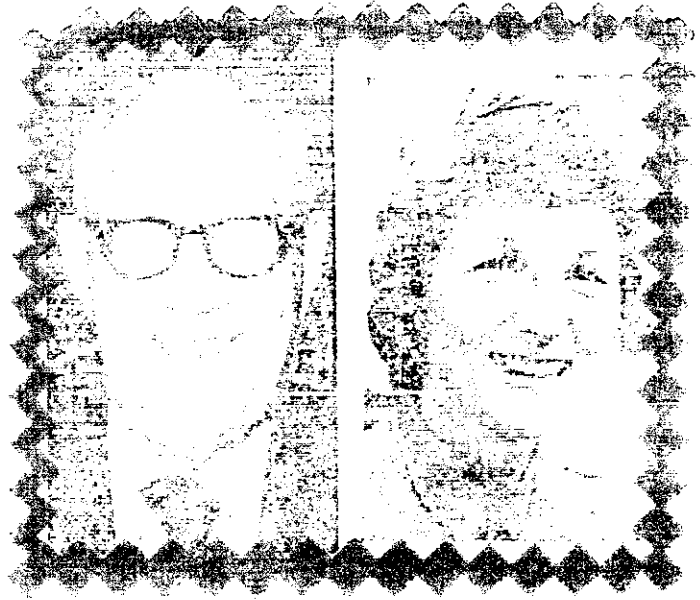
Council chambers erupted with fury when these incidents took place, and Mayor Hayes was put under direct stress. She questions how she ever dealt with the anger directed from the community and Council.⁴³

Conclusion

"There are some men in politics who can never accept women in leadership positions. It's part of the Dick-and-Jane feeling we grew up with. It's their problem, not mine," commented Janet Gray Hayes. ⁴⁴

Mrs. Hayes was correct; it was their problem, not hers. She was rarely ridiculed, disrespected, or ignored. Occasionally when on the Executive Board of the US Conference of Mayors' she was mistaken as a mayor's secretary; or the council would not acknowledge her as a woman in their opening statement.⁴⁵ However, her strong will survived through these gender issues, and she managed to keep her focus on San Jose. Mrs. Hayes was a woman who began her career as the chairman of transportation at Trace Elementary, and her horizons expanded to the first woman Mayor of San Jose

In the center of San Jose, lives a petite and gracefully aging lady. Just to look at her, one might see the wisdom and experience that comes with age. Janet Gray Hayes had influence, power, and the energy to maintain and improve the growing city of San Jose, and helped instill integrity into the politics of the ever-growing City of San Jose.



Orrin Barr Collins and Janet Gray Hayes would be pictured together to display the rivalry of the top-two contenders

Mrs. Hayes worked with the diverse people of San Jose



The cover of a pamphlet Janet Gray Hayes would pass out when walking precincts



Janet Gray Hayes sworn into office
January 2, 1979

The Hayes Family.

	Registered voters	Per cent voting	Hayes	Collins	Garza	Venut
Almaden	11,706	53.6%	42.1% 2,641	35.1% 2,199	7.90% 497	6.50% 407
Edenvale	25,539	48.3%	36.7% 4,529	33.7% 4,119	14.0% 1,732	6.60% 817
Wilsonville	34,225	40.7%	37.4% 7,680	34.0% 7,791	9.20% 1,895	6.20% 1,270
West Valley	43,072	49.6%	36.1% 7,709	29.6% 6,332	10.9% 2,336	9.80% 2,097
Central	38,962	45.8%	30.7% 5,172	36.5% 6,503	13.5% 2,409	6.90% 1,238
Alum Rock	17,078	38.5%	30.5% 2,004	19.4% 1,279	33.9% 2,230	5.70% 373
Berryessa	11,270	50.0%	34.9% 1,968	28.6% 1,614	16.7% 943	9.20% 521
Evergreen	7,031	52.9%	33.6% 1,251	30.7% 1,143	17.6% 653	7.90% 293
South San Jose	11,017	40.1%	32.0% 1,412	25.7% 1,135	22.3% 987	7.80% 346
North San Jose	792	53.9%	33.7% 144	34.9% 149	16.2% 69	8.70% 37
Alviso	392	39.5%	23.7% 33	28.7% 40	31.6% 44	5.00% 7

Precinct analysis shows who
got the votes and where 7-17-74

Mrs. Hayes collaborating with the
San Jose Police Department





Mrs. Hayes wins by thin margin
11/7/74

Forget me Not. one of Mrs. Hayes's
clever campaign ideas



**Mayor Janet Gray Hayes
is Santa Clara County's most admired
public official.***



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