



The Extension Tradition in the Columbia River Gorge, August 9, 2016

Title

4-H Extension in Hood River County

Date

August 9, 2016

Location

Mid-Columbia Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Hood River, Oregon.

Summary

In her interview, Billie Stevens discusses her upbringing and connection with Extension while growing up in Idaho; her college experience as a Home Economics major at the University of Idaho; her short tenure as a public school teacher; and her decision to relocate to Prineville, Oregon, where she had accepted as position as a 4-H Extension Agent. In recalling her Prineville years, Stevens touches upon her involvement with outreach related to home economics, pet ownership, and the creative arts. She also shares her memories of earning her OSU master's degree in Adult Education, and her sense of the ways in which Prineville changed as a community during her years there.

Stevens then describes her move to Hood River and her career as a 4-H Extension Agent serving Hood River County. In this, she comments on the evolution of Hood River as a community; the status of the Hood River branch upon her arrival; and the activities in which she engaged during this phase of her career. Of particular interest are Stevens' memories of Extension engagement with the local Latino population; the many programs that Extension spearheaded to assist with family and community development; and the especially busy life of an Extension Agent during the weeks surrounding the county fair. The interview concludes with notes on retirement and reflections on change within the community and the Extension Service.

Interviewee

Billie Stevens

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/columbia/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, today is August 9th, 2016 and we're at the Mid-Columbia Extension Experiment Station Center in Hood River, Oregon with Billie Stevens. And Billie is a retired Extension agent who worked for OSU in two chapters, once in Prineville for about nine years, and then here in Hood River beginning in 1985 and retired at a date I don't know but we'll uncover that at some point. She was with OSU for a long time, so we'll talk a lot about that, and talk about her broader life as well, and I'd like to begin with your childhood. Where were you born?

Billie Stevens: I grew up in Meridian, Idaho which is just outside of Boise, about 10-12 miles from Boise. I grew up on a dairy farm there.

CP: Can you tell me a bit about your family background?

BS: Okay, well, my dad was a dairyman and I had one brother and three sisters and we all worked on the farm and we were all part of that. We grew up in 4-H showing – my dad had registered Holsteins – so we showed Holstein cows and we were just a typical family farm. Everybody helped.

CP: Can you tell me a bit more about what it's like to be on a typical family farm?

BS: Oh, well, that means that everybody gets to help because at that point in time they didn't have a lot of money to pay for extra help, and so that means that before I went to school, I got to get up to feed calves and when I came home after school would help feed the animals, help milk. I milked. My dad had different sizes, but when he retired there was about 100 or 150 cows, so in today's standards it's very small, but back then it was a pretty good sized farm. They raised hay and corn, made silage. I don't know, for whatever reason, my dad didn't have the girls work in the fields. We maybe would drive tractor, but we didn't do a lot of that, but we actually did work the animals so they would be able to do that and then we always helped my mom around the house because she did a lot of canning and freezing. That kinda stuff, and so it was all hands on deck, everybody always helped.

CP: What do you remember of your experience of community life? Was there a lot of involvement with the community of Meridian or Boise? It doesn't sound like it was too far away.

BS: You know, I was trying to think, we weren't probably really involved with a community like Meridian. My dad was very involved with things like the Holstein Association. My dad was actually pretty involved, my brothers were pretty involved, my mom not as involved with the community. My dad was a 4-H leader for probably 50 years and so he was involved in that way, very involved with actually the Extension Service there, and so I grew up knowing about that. Just because of that I was involved with the 4-H. They were involved in different ways, my brother probably even more so than my dad, and they farmed together, and so when I talk about that I think about that 'cause they were farmers together. And so we were involved in the normal community things. We were not part of the Grange. We were fairly active, but when you're dairymen, you know, that takes a lot of time. You're there twice a day milking cows for two or three hours.

CP: Yeah. How would the milk move from the farm to the end-user?

BS: Well it depended on when it was. At the end, they were grade-A organization and so the tanker trucks, goes into a big tank, is held there, it's cold. The tanker trucks would come. When I was in high school, we were not a grade-A organization and so they put them in milk cans, and then they would have to haul that to the creamery, daily or every other day. Almost daily they took it to the creamery. When I was I think younger, there used to be a truck that came by, but that was long before my time. I don't remember that but, yeah, they would be the big milk cans and I remember my dad throwing them up on the truck and taking them to town.

CP: Can you tell me a bit more about the role that 4-H played in your upbringing?

BS: Well, it was always a big part of our lives. I was basically in the livestock side of it and so it was I learned to be involved with people and the 4-H club and all the typical leadership and having to get along and that type of thing.

[0:05:08]

I showed dairy at the fair which was always a big part of our family. We always enjoyed going to the fair. My dad would take his registered animals to the fair also, so it wasn't just 4-H animals, it was both of ours would go. We would just, you know, enjoyed it. It was part of our lives.

CP: I'm interested in the showing of the animals. Can you tell me a bit more about the specific lead up, I guess, to the county fair for you to show your animal or animals?

BS: Well you would - depends on if they had gone before, we always tied 'em up early and then we had to break them to be used to leading and then you would clean them and make sure all the hair's off so usually a month or so before fair, the calves, anyway, we would just care for them and so they would be used to knowing how to be around people and how to show. They know how to stop and walk when you want them to and be tame and that kind of stuff. Tied up and worked with them that way.

CP: Any stand-out memories from fairs growing up of showing animals?

BS: No, not anything real big. It was always fun. The biggest one was when I was in grade school and it was our local fair, the Meridian Dairy Show, and my dad was the judge there and so that was always kinda - it was strange. And so he placed all the animals, except for me, and I soon figured out that it wasn't because I had a bad animal, it was because he didn't want to place his own animals, so then he walked out of the ring and someone else put me wherever they thought I deserved. And that was always kind of a fun "What's going on here?" cause we had fairly good quality animals so usually I'd place fairly high.

CP: What was school like for you growing up?

BS: School? Well, gee, I started in a three room schoolhouse where there were like two grades together, but then soon that closed and we went to Meridian, rode the school bus to school and went to the local schools, went to high school, involved with things like FHA then, which was Future Homemakers of America and then the clubs. There weren't sports for girls then, so we didn't do sports. Went to the football games and basketball games.

CP: So FHA was a primary sort of social or recreational activity for you?

BS: Yeah it was one of them. I actually was a state officer, I remember going to a national conference when I was in high school, so yeah it was pretty active. That was one of the ones I did, anyway. Kinda just matched some of my interests.

CP: What were some of the activities that association would pursue? Was it sort of associated with Home Ec types of activities?

BS: Kind of, but we also did a lot of community service, I remember doing that. And leadership is a part of that. It's a lot like a FFA but we didn't do the fair type of things. We had leadership, community service, getting involved, helping out around the school.

CP: Was there an expectation from either your family or yourself that you would go to college?

BS: We've talked about that, it's kinda interesting. There was never a "You will go to college", that you have to go college, it was just kind of assumed that we would go to college. All of my sisters and I graduated from college - my brother, he was not interested, he was more interested in farming and so, yeah, it wasn't like you had to. My dad always wanted to go to college and was not able to which is something I guess we all just figured we would do.

CP: And you went to the University of Idaho?

BS: I went to the University of Idaho. That was because I went into Home Economics and so that was the home economics school in Idaho, but also that was the university that was associated with the Extension Service and so when I was a young person I went up there for their - what they call it - summer school or whatever they called it at that point in time and so I was familiar with that and also my two older sisters went there so it was just kind of a natural.

[0:10:00]

And my dad, because he was so involved with the Extension and stuff, he was kind of associated with it so it was just kind of a natural flow for us to go there.

CP: What kind of role did he assume with Extension?

BS: He was on some advisory boards. They have a program called DHS...DHR? Dairy Herd Improvement, DHI, and they would come and test your cows every month to see how much they how much milk they gave, what the butterfat was, and so he was involved with that. He was a judge, a cow judge, so that was part Extension. He was involved with that, advisor roles.

CP: So, it sounds like you're pretty well acquainted with the University of Idaho and I'm guessing it was a pretty easy transition, is that correct?

BS: Yeah it was a fairly easy transition. I had a sister going there too, so that made it easy.

CP: Can you tell me about your academic progression in college?

BS: Well, I went into Home Economics. I don't know what you mean by progression, that's the normal home economics field.

CP: Were there standout aspects of the curriculum that you can recall from that time period as a Home Ec major?

BS: Not really. I enjoyed the clothing and textiles side. I also enjoyed the food nutrition side of it, especially the nutrition side, because we had a good nutrition instructor.

CP: In looking at your records and preparing for this, I saw a note that you would go home during the summertimes and work for your dad and there's a specific detail there you were milking eighty cows twice daily.

BS: I don't know where you picked that up but, yeah, because my parents basically paid for my college, I didn't have to get loans or whatever, I felt it was important to go back and help on the farm so they wouldn't have to pay people to do what I could do. They'd be in charge of mostly my brother and I at that point in time I was in college. I would do the milking.

CP: You're in school, you're a Home Ec major, what is your intent with your degree while you're in school? You wound up being a teacher; is that something you set out to do or did that evolve over time?

BS: Yeah, I think it just evolved, that's just where it was. At that point in time, I was not going to go into the Extension because I wasn't sure how stable the Extension Service was. It's definitely changed a lot. So there were teaching positions open, so I decided I'd try that for a while...

CP: Did you have to get an extra credential at that time?

BS: No. At that time, you had to keep getting continuing ed but I only taught for three years. I just had to get a Wyoming teaching certificate.

CP: How did the Wyoming come about?

BS: It was just a job was available and I tried it out. They didn't pay very much, but they paid more than Idaho paid and so that made it a little more attractive and it was kind of an adventure 'cause I was away from home.

CP: Was it much of an adjustment moving to Wyoming?

BS: No. Other than it was really cold there, no. I enjoyed it, it was a good three years.

CP: Can you tell me a bit more about your experiences as a teacher those three years?

BS: I taught both junior high and high school, enjoyed both age groups. Junior high kids were totally full of energy and it was nice then to have a class of high school. It was just a small school, probably like 2 -3000 in the town and then you also were involved with being supervisors of organizations and so your life pretty much revolved around the school.

CP: Yeah. What made you decide to eventually move into Extension?

BS: At the school I was at, they had a lot of turnover in the administrative field. It made it not as much fun, because you would have 6 supervisors in three years and so I just decided to look at some other things and I knew Extension. I was qualified to work in that position so I decided to check it out and Oregon had some positions open.

CP: So it was just a matter of there was a job available at OSU and you applied for it and then got it?

BS: Actually I didn't get the job I applied for, but there were two jobs. I have a good friend that was the John Day Extension agent, and we both applied for the John Day job even though I was sure I probably didn't want that.

[0:15:00]

She got the John Day job and I got the Crook County had one that came open and so I got the Crook County job. I always said they were really smart because they knew which one to put us in 'cause we both fit those positions well.

CP: Tell me about moving to Prineville, what Prineville was like back then. This was in 1976.

BS: 1976. It's rural. I always tell people it's more cowboy than Wyoming was 'cause it's very rural, lots of ranchers, good people, great people, they're all just down-home people. The women that I worked with, I really enjoyed them. They were really good supporters of Extension. At that time they had just gone through and had received – they were the first service district in the state to be established, this service district, which is a – their county budget, they were taken out of the county budget and they went out to get their own piece of the pie and that's called a service district and they had just got that money started in July when I started there so Extension was on everybody's mind 'cause this was kind of a new thing and everybody had to do a lot of work so people were very supportive of the organization.

CP: Now is this – I've been reading about different Extension agencies in Oregon, that they've been essentially kinda just voting on whether or not they want to tax themselves to support...is this what you're talking about? The first example of that?

BS: Yes, that was the very first one that was done in the state. The chair agent was Tom Bunch and he was pretty smart about putting it together, works well.

CP: Now was timber still fairly vibrant in the area at that time?

BS: Yes, it was timber and lumber. And ag, cattle.

CP: What were the duties of this initial position for you?

BS: It was 50/50, 50% home ec, 50% 4-H, so I was totally responsible for all the 4-H program, or the majority of it, making it happen. And the Home Ec side, at that time, a lot of the focus was on what they called study groups, they call them FCE groups, or I don't know what they call them now, but it was groups of women that met around the county and the idea is you bring educational information from the university to them in an informal education setting. They come in, teach a leader, then they go back out – "teach one, reach many" type thing and that was a large focus as well. We had a lot of specialists that came out, did a lot of teaching of special workshops for us. So I split my time between the two, it was 50/50, so 4-H is getting clubs going and activities and fair and those kinds of things.

CP: You mentioned the service district. I'm interested in knowing a bit more about your sense of the branch when you arrived, what the state of the branch was. Was it in pretty good shape, or were there issues that needed to be dealt with?

BS: No, it was in pretty good shape, except they hadn't had a home economist or a 4-H agent for, I don't know, a year or two, and so when I got there, I had to jump right into a fair like in two weeks or a month and so there were things we had to do. No, it was very stable, it was just getting things up and running again.

CP: When you arrived, were you told that there are a specific set of issues that we want to try to address or were you, was it up to you to survey the landscape?

BS: Yeah, I was able to just kind of figure it out. Other than, yeah, we have to get fair going. That was what I was told to do. I was able to kinda evaluate it. I had good support from my staff chair, and he would direct me very gently, push me.

CP: What were some of the issues that emerged that you felt needed to be addressed at that time?

BS: That's a long time ago.

CP: Yeah.

BS: I'm not sure I remember. Food preservation is always an issue, you know, and I'm sure, especially that time of year, we had to do things making sure food preservation, food safety, but I really can't tell you big issues that bumped up. I don't remember.

CP: Again, from your personnel file that I went through in preparing for this, there's notes of technical leadership for four different areas. Home Ec is something that's pretty straightforward, I think, but there's also horses, dogs, and creative arts. Do you have recollection of working as a technical leader for horses, dogs, and creative arts?

[0:20:00]

BS: I worked with the 4-H leaders with that. I personally didn't do workshops in those areas, but I brought in people. We had a great horse leader, Dick Hoppus, and he probably did some trainings for me, I'm sure, I know he did. We had a good dog group, somebody worked with them, and maybe those were areas that needed some help moving along.

CP: Now, is the emphasis of these trainings just teaching children how to be good owners of pets, horses, and dogs?

BS: That's part of it, yeah, and part of it is getting along with people and leadership and making good decisions. That's kind of the whole point of 4-H, that horses and dogs are the way to help them develop into good citizens. It's just the medium we used to get there.

CP: Interesting. And it plays out in a lot of different ways over the course of your career, that is the end goal, but arrived at in a lot of different ways. You created a young homemakers program?

BS: Oh yeah. The study group program was focused more on older women – their kids are pretty much gone – and so we were trying to pull in young homemakers that needed help with all the beginning skills in life and child development and food nutrition, all that. So we were fairly successful, we had several groups go.

CP: And you worked a lot with volunteers too it sounds like...

BS: Yeah, everything you did was with volunteers. All the 4-H leaders were volunteers, and all the women in the study groups and all the officers and everybody who works for that, were volunteers.

CP: Was it a piece of your job, recruiting people to volunteer? Or was there pretty strong support kinda built in to the community?

BS: There was pretty good support, but you had to recruit, especially 4-H leaders. That's a continually changing group of people, so you're continually recruiting and working, trying to find volunteers.

CP: What kind of responsibilities would a 4-H leader take on?

BS: You always tell them their first responsibility is to the youth and they help keep the club going. They have to know a little about the subject matter or be willing to learn a bit about the subject matter and then they have to know how to work with kids. And how to help them grow. Hopefully they'll take other leadership roles, too.

CP: In the early 1980s, you began to pursue a master's degree from OSU. What brought this about? Why did you decide to do that?

BS: It was required if I wanted to keep my job. You had to have a Master's within six years.

CP: OK.

BS: Actually, that was one of the attractions to the job, is at some places you had to have your Master's before you could get there. With OSU, they would help you get that.

CP: Did you receive any release time from your job or was this on top of a full-time job?

BS: No, I actually spent two quarters on campus and then two times that I was on campus and one time I was able to pick up classes in Bend and just here and there.

CP: Can you tell me about those two quarters in Corvallis? Your memories of being a student at OSU?

BS: They were fun. It was fun to be on campus and to just learn. I got to know a lot of different kinds of people. One term I actually lived in the dorm and so that was a new experience for me, too, living in a dorm. But the classes were very interesting and it was fun and it was challenging.

CP: And you majored in adult education.

BS: Adult education, yeah. Which was just kind of a natural because that's what I was working with.

CP: Were there any professors that made a particular impact on you or classes?

BS: It's too long ago. None of 'em jump out right now.

CP: And I'm guessing that you were able to apply what you were learning to your job in a pretty immediate way.

BS: Right, right, a lot of things just paralleled and that was one of the reasons why adult education was so popular, especially with Extension, is just because it was a natural, we were learning things all along, and I still use things.

[0:25:00]

My current position is working with volunteers for the local food bank and I still learn lots of things I learned there that I can still apply.

CP: What do you remember about Corvallis from that time? Quite a bit different from Prineville, I have a feeling.

BS: Yeah [pause]. Yeah, there were lots more stuff going on right then. One of the things I remember is we had a great basketball team going then and so it was always fun. I think I got to go to a game or two. And then also I knew kids from 4-H who were there and I knew friends who were there so, yeah, we were able to go to a lot of the sporting events and just enjoy them.

CP: I want to ask you a bit about professional involvement. You've been involved with the Oregon Extension Association, I think, for a number of years, but you were director for a couple of years, as well. Can you tell me about that organization and your memories of being the director?

BS: You know, it's just our professional organization. It was there to kind of support us and make sure, you know, help us in ways professionally we needed help, and as director I was just helping move that organization where it needs to go, I guess. No real outstanding big memories on that one.

CP: How about the Oregon Youth Range Camp Committee?

BS: Oh, that's a long time ago. And part of that is because I had a staff chair that was very involved with range and so I'm sure he pushed me into that a little bit. We just helped. I just thought about that the other day, I don't know why I didn't go. They organized this really cool camp for the kids and I just helped kind of in the planning, but I never actually attended. It would've been fun, I think. Now I wonder why I didn't and I guess it probably came about fair time, I think is why.

CP: What kinds of things happened at that camp?

BS: I think it was learning about range management and animals and probably normally use activities too, but a lot of the focus was learning about nature and range and how it all fits together.

CP: Did you maintain an association with the Home Economics department at OSU at all?

BS: Yeah, but not...

CP: I saw a reference to some committee work that you were involved with...

BS: I guess I was, I forgot about that. I was on their...oh, I just blanked on it. You know, when you're going to become a full professor, whatever you call that. Promotion and tenure committee, yeah, that was probably the biggest thing I worked on was that one. Did that, I dunno how many years, several years. That was always interesting too, because you got to know some of the individuals there and you worked close with some of the people like Margie Woodburn who was the Food/Nutrition specialist. She was very involved with Extension, so you knew her probably better than the other ones. Clara Pratt, you know, she was partly Extension and part sometimes there, and so you got to know some of them. Yeah, so you were involved with them and you always knew the Dean.

CP: Yeah, we interviewed Clara Pratt for this project.

BS: Oh, did you?

CP: She was a major figure in a lot of ways...

BS: Isn't she an amazing person?

CP: Any memories of her in particular?

BS: You know, most of the time, no, other than she just is a very talented person. I probably worked closer with Vicky Small, who her and Clara changed positions about the time that I came. Yeah, Clara was always very supportive of Extension. I just know that she's a very talented, very smart woman.

CP: Are there any other OSU people who were important to you during your years in Prineville – either in Corvallis or in Prineville – that we haven't mentioned?

BS: Like you said, Tom Bunch is really it – because he was the staff chair, he understood the importance of the family and the work of the youth and was always very supportive in that way. We always had, you know, the people at Corvallis were always supportive. None of them are standing out. We worked really closely with a Home Ec specialist there. People like Jan Webber and Carolyn Robb and Vicky Small and some of those people, they were very good. And the 4-H people were too, but it was a different kind of working relationship with them.

[0:30:00]

CP: Was there fairly regular contact with Corvallis for you? Were there trips and other ways, or were you on your own out in Prineville a little bit?

BS: Sometimes you were in Corvallis a lot more than you wanted to be. We usually, depending on what was going on, what you were doing, and what you had going on, had committees on campus a lot of times, once a month maybe,

and sometimes it'd be three or four months before... You know, they were there to support you if you needed them, but they weren't always necessarily there. There was a lot more contact with the home economics specialist while I was in Prineville than there is now. They came a lot of times to your counties, you know, teaching workshops, you know, Alice Mills Morrow, we would go to the Heatherlands and taught classes, you know, flying in that area. I had probably much closer contact with the Home Ec specialist at that time than they do now. I think it's pretty rare to have one come out into the counties now.

CP: You would, I'm sure, have to do a fair amount of travel around the county and that in your capacities.

BS: The main area was Prineville, but there was Powell Butte, which was there quite a bit and Paulina. You'd go up there two or three times, four times a year anyway, at least.

CP: When you left in 1985, I'm interested in changes in the community that you observed over the course of that time. I have a feeling there were a few.

BS: Since then?

CP: No, while you were in Prineville '76-85.

BS: You know what? There was not a lot of change in that community at that time. It was still logging. Logging was still real strong, you know, ag was still real strong, still pretty rural at that point in time.

CP: OK. So that natural resources space must have started to decline a little bit after you left.

BS: Yes, after I left, then especially the timber really fell out.

CP: Yeah.

BS: And then it's grown a lot since then or quite a bit since then.

CP: In a way that people probably would have never imagined.

BS: Yeah, right, with Google and all the stuff above as you're coming in to Prineville, but at that time there was not a lot of change in the community. Still pretty rural, pretty conservative.

CP: Les Schwab was a big factor, a big player.

BS: Les Schwab was a big factor, right, but now they have all that on the heights up there. They were downtown. He was a big employer—a lot of people I worked with, their husbands worked there.

CP: He himself was still alive then, I'm sure.

BS: Yeah, I even knew his mother-in-law. She was involved with the programs and stuff. And his daughter, she was involved in programs at that point in time, too.

CP: So, what made you decide to relocate in 1985 to Hood River?

BS: I don't know, it just was time for a change. You know, you kind of feel like you hit a lull and it's time to move on to try something different, and I like this area and I had family close by and that always makes it attractive.

CP: So you were thinking about Hood River or was this just a job that came open and you applied for it?

BS: Yeah, it was a job that came open and that, but I wasn't just going to move anywhere. This was a place where I wanted to move to. Partly because I just like the area and then partly because of family issues.

CP: So you were familiar with it and again settling in was probably not too terribly difficult.

BS: No it wasn't, no, not too bad at all.

CP: What was the community like back then? The community I'm sure has changed a lot in the last 30 years.

BS: Windsurfing was just gonna start. In fact, when I interviewed, one of the mills had just closed and went down and I said "What do you see?" you know, and this lady goes, "You know, I just think this windsurfing thing is going to take off, I really do." And she was, of course, right. There was not as much tourism as there is now and, of course, prices and like housing prices [0:35:00] were not anywhere close to what they are now. Tourism and windsurfing and all that hadn't started when I first came.

CP: Was the section of town on the other side of the hill – you get off the highway and that's what you see – I mean, a lot of people who have not really spent much time in Hood River, they think that that is Hood River. Was that as built up then as it is now?

BS: The West End?

CP: Yes.

BS: No, no. I would often talk about if we'd been smart we'd have bought property over there, seemed like the slum side of town, wasn't much there at all. There was one trailer park, Les Schwab, and that was about it. That's totally changed. You gotta tell people they gotta come up to the heights to really see what it's like. And another difference was the farmers were making tons of money then. They were making a lot more money and their pears and stuff. And so ag was different too, because it was much more lucrative than now.

CP: Why is that?

BS: I think the price of pears, price of apples. They've taken out all the apples, we had lots more apples then, they've taken apples out since then. I'm not probably the right person to ask on the economy but it's...

CP: Do you think it's a lot more apples being grown now?

BS: No, we've taken out apples because people want Washington apples, not Oregon apples. That's kinda the premium. The price of pears, they just aren't getting what they used to. It might be coming back, but it was totally different then for the ag. They had plenty money then.

CP: Were those the primary two crops at that time? Apples and pears?

BS: Yeah, right. And now apples are way down, the line even. Let's see, I think cherries are next...then blueberries I'm sure is coming up. I haven't heard because I haven't been involved, you know, for six years here so I don't know all the ins and outs of the Ag like the way I used to.

CP: Yeah. Oregon is now almost the nation's leader in blueberries.

BS: I believe that. And how it's changed. We didn't have wineries here at that time, you know, that's a whole new industry. The cideries, that's a whole new industry that's coming here. Brewpubs weren't around but we have plenty of those now too. All that's changed.

CP: Do you think that happened just because people recognized an opportunity or was the city actively involved in kinda cultivating these different areas of growth because it has exploded and has brought in a lot of money to the community.

BS: Oh yeah. I don't know for sure. I'm sure there were people who had a lot of foresight to know that that was out there to go after.

CP: Alright, well back to 1985. So you arrived in...was this a similar position to the one you had in Prineville? Or was it somewhat different?

BS: When I started it was a little, it was different because I had an 80/20 split here, so my main focus was on the adult home economics side and with just a supportive role in 4-H. And so I was able to work on different kinds of projects that

I wasn't able to work on down there because I didn't have time. We made some parenting videos with the help of Corvallis and that were teaching parents on parenting things. We never would've had time for such things before.

CP: And this position description shifted over time, from 80/20 to something else?

BS: Yeah, it moved all over the place. I can't even remember what it went to, what it ended up at. It kinda went 50/50 and then to, I have I think, I don't know, 20% admin and I don't know if it was 40/40, I don't remember how it all ended up, but yeah, when I took over the staff chair position and then we also lost a 4-H agent and so then it ended up that I was totally responsible for the total 4-H program here and then the Home Ec program and the staff chair. Yeah, it changed totally.

CP: So, I asked you about the Prineville branch when you arrived there, I'll ask it about the Hood River branch as well, what the sort of the status was of the branch when you arrived. Did they have the service district at that time?

[0:40:00]

BS: No, they still don't have a service district. It was stable. Dave Burkhart was the staff chair, and he was always very conservative, but we always had plenty. Financially we were stable and Dave was very well-respected in the ag community and in the whole community and so he was supported financially by the county.

CP: 4-H has been in this community for over 100 years. Do you know much about the history, the history that pre-dated you, at all? Or, reflect on that at all?

BS: What kind of history are you thinking?

CP: I don't know.

BS: I knew some of the 4-H leaders that were 50 year 4-H leaders. They had really good 4-H leaders. Lee Foster was the staff chair way before me and he did a lot of 4-H, very supportive of the 4-H program, so he's had a really good reputation in this community, and I think he continues to have that. It was able to reach a lot of – maybe now it's focused a lot on animals – but it had Home Ec, it had horses, and the whole schamear, it was a very well-balanced program, especially when I came.

CP: Let's talk a bit about some projects that you were involved in. I know you had some administrative responsibilities, as you noted with 4-H, but you also managed the Oregon 4-H nutrition program?

BS: Mmm-hmm

CP: Can you tell me about that?

BS: Well, that's one that...oh golly, it actually started in Multnomah County and it was to teach lower income families how to better utilize their food and one of the focuses that I took, because I felt it was very much in need, was the Hispanic area, to try to reach into that community. And to do that I hired nutrition aides that were Latino culture and so they could reach in to that community easier. I couldn't, because I don't know Spanish, for starters, and they just understand it and so we were able to do a lot of in-home teaching, kind of like this study group model where you get lots of people into the home and then we would teach them how to utilize the different foods, you know, one of the worries I had when the program assistant, and I know where it came from cause it came from the food bank, but they would open their cupboards and they would have rows and rows of canned foods. They would have no clue how to use that food and so one of our goals was to try and teach them. And then we, later on, we started doing some in-school programs, too.

CP: The outreach to the Latino community seems important to me. Was this a first? Did you introduce this?

BS: I think to a minimal extent. I think it's really important and we also did it in the 4-H side, the adult side, especially a lot of the families. When the first farmworkers came, they just came and left, and so there wasn't a lot of impact on the community, and even when I first came, they were much more migrant, but then they all started settling out here and so I felt it was really important, especially that first generation, needed some assistance with how to navigate our system.

CP: Can you tell me about some of the specifics on the 4-H side with respect to Latino outreach?

BS: Where we started and I think, I was thinking about this, I think we were one of the first youth groups who really worked at this, and we had a school administrator tell us, that he said, "You know where you need to go is where the soccer is, that's where the kids are, that's what they like." And so we had a soccer program, and different clubs that would play each other, and that was a way that we moved in to that community to get to know them. That ended up being pretty successful.

CP: Were there other points of intersection, cultural intersection, besides soccer, or was that kind of the main...?

BS: That was the biggest one and that was a tough one. Then, once we kinda got known in that community, then they started moving out into some of our traditional [0:45:00] programs, and so it kinda started there. They're moving more and more but our community, they're assimilating more and more. That was a good way to get started.

CP: The power of soccer.

BS: Yeah, yeah.

CP: On the family community development side, there's a few programs I want to ask you about. One is the new Parent Services program; was this the one where the videos were made?

BS: No, no, actually it wasn't. I worked with Childcare Partners, which was teaching, working with the childcare providers. No, New Parent Services was a program that – It was identified within our community that parents needed help knowing how to parent. And so a group of people came together and there was a model out of, I can't remember, back east somewhere, that they used volunteers to reach parents and to go into the home and meet with them monthly or weekly or whatever. So we developed a program around that model and that where we trained the volunteers and they would work with new parents for a year. That was very successful. And it's continued on in a different format than the volunteer model, but the volunteer model lasted for almost 8 or 10 years maybe and we housed them and then we ran out of room here and then they moved on to different places, but that was a good program. And our person that worked with child abuse, they saw a decline in the child abuse within families after our program started, so we felt like it did happen in our community.

CP: How about the Womens' Financial Information program?

BS: That's the team with AARP, and you do a series of about 8 or 10 lessons and teach women on how to manage their finances. That was fairly successful, did that 2 or 3 times and that was kind of fun to do.

CP: The Oregon Food and Nutrition program; is that under the same tent as the food-stamp nutrition program, or is it something different?

BS: They must be the same, don't know what I wrote down. Don't know what I'm thinking on that one.

CP: How about bankruptcy debtors' education?

BS: Oh, that was something I did right at the end of my career, and there were about four or five different counties that did this and we developed a program and if you're going to do bankruptcy, before you do bankruptcy, you have to go through a series of educational trainings and so I offered that here. I don't know why people didn't come to it as much. It wasn't as successful as we had hoped it would be, but we trained people, so I guess they got their bankruptcy. It was always amazing that people's finances... You'd think they'd understand the basics, but it was just a basic, how to set up a budget, how to...

CP: Yeah. On the 4-H side, a couple of specific questions. I'm interested in the team leadership camp. We've touched on leadership a little bit but there's a specific camp here for team leaders?

BS: Yeah, we camped with Wasco, Sherman and Hood River counties and our focus was on team leadership and actually how we moved it from being an adult-directed camp, planning it, to we had teens come together and plan the camp and

then they ran the camp. It was like a weekend camp and they would do classes, they would do different types of activities that worked with kids and focused on leadership and that was always a fun camp. And I guess the best part of it, I always felt, was the teen group that planned it, they grew leaps and bounds by doing that.

CP: You also ran babysitting clinics.

BS: Yeah, yeah, that was something I inherited and then continued with that. I again teamed with Childcare Partners, which is a works with adult parts of daycare and we would do weeklong clinics after school. Those were widely popular. We'd do 50 at a time, you know, kids at a time, [0:50:00] many, and then we'd do them all around the county, not just here in Hood River, we did them in two or three different sites. Yeah, that was a lot of good, I think, too.

CP: It's striking to hear you talk about these things. We associate 4-H so much with fair and with animals, but there's so much that was done to really strengthen the fiber of the community and help people with their lives in real and meaningful and tangible ways.

BS: Well, I would hope so. You know, fair's just always the showcase for the community, but you know the real work is done in the clubs. One of the things we always encouraged with the clubs, I felt like, was focused on community service. We wanted every club to do at least one community service project through the year and then we encouraged them to do a poster-something of fair to show what they did and at that time they were doing quite a bit of it, that was the focus.

CP: Let's talk a bit about the fair. You've been super involved in both places that you've worked. I'm interested in knowing what it's like for you, the run up to the fair and the fair itself, and all the work you put in. What are the roles that you play? Or have played?

BS: I always felt like if you really organized the front end of the fair then fair could be fun, you know. You work really closely with all your 4-H leaders and make sure they had roles and you had people that were responsible for all the areas because there's no way one person can run it. And so it's a management, is what it is. It's management, and then allowing them to do their jobs once you get to that. I had a thought and it went out of my mind...but my roles were organizing it and once we get there just making, kinda making sure that people who were working have what they need to do and then putting out fires which is there were always lots of fires, you know whatever you're dealing with, animals, and lots of money, you always have lots of fires. And again, it goes back to trying to involve the older youth and helping them have roles too so as not to say, "I sell my animal and make big money" but "I learned something along the way and how I'm doing" and that's the important part of fairs. I always had a good time at fair, you know, from the time I was little and so fair has always been a fun time, but it's always very stressful, very tiring because you've got tons of things going on at the same time, especially if you're running the livestock side and the Home Ec side which by the end that's what I was doing. But you have good people and you have a good staff here that helps you and...

CP: Some long days, I'm sure.

BS: Long days, long days...yeah.

CP: How did the fairs in Prineville and Hood River differ?

BS: Let's see...

CP: If there was significant differences...

BS: Yeah, not big differences. Probably...not a whole lot, fairs were fairs no matter where you were at.

CP: Similarly sized and everything?

BS: Similar size, yeah, right. I had a probably a bigger horse program in Prineville than here, probably a little less conflict in the horse program in Prineville. They were actually pretty similar in size. We just have good people, that's the way you get through it. I learned that you just, let it go...

CP: Did you have horses growing up?

BS: No.

CP: No?

BS: No. My dad said he had horses, you know, of course, 'cause they had to have horses cause they worked with horses, but he didn't think horses and cows mixed and so we didn't have horses.

CP: I found an article online in which, I think it was towards the end of your career, you talked about the hope to expand some non-traditional programs – entomology and natural and chemical sciences were referenced in that article. Did anything become of that or is it still ongoing?

BS: We did do some robotics by the end. We were able to get a little of that in. I had program assistants that did after school stuff in robotics we're able to do that but nope, I just didn't have enough time. Time sometimes runs out, you know, [0:55:00] there's only so many hours in the day.

CP: Well, I have a few concluding questions here. I'm wondering if there are themes...before I get to those questions, I'm wondering if there are any themes, or projects or topics that were important to your career that we haven't talked about.

BS: No. I was just thinking about the Hispanic one – you said soccer and I just remembered one of the things that we did do a really good job with. I had a really good program assistant. We did an after school middle school program with Hispanic kids in the mid-Valley area and then we did a summer program with them too and that actually when I look back on it I think was really pretty successful how we did. We reached middle school kids and so when you asked me beyond soccer, yeah, we really did reach beyond soccer, we did. We tried to, I mean we just did after school activities not, some were fun, some were more educational. I just remember the summer, one of the things she did she invited someone in that did videoing and stuff, and you know, that was a fun program, I remember. It had a funny name and people didn't like it but the kids liked it, so..."Oops" or something like that, that's what it was called.

CP: I have a note here, too, about a Mexican dance program.

BS: Oh yeah, we did, we had one of those too. I forget about all these things. And then one of the fun parts of that one for me was they have all these little girls and then they needed outfits and so we sewed with the moms the skirts for all these little girls' outfits and so that was fun. I still see one of the key people, I still run into her all the time and that. And we did several daycamps, too. Forgot about that with the Hispanics and we did quite a bit. I really did focus a lot on that community because they were not a part of our community and they were just starting to assimilate. Now they're a big part of it.

CP: Yeah. Again, that seems like it was a very important component of your career.

BS: Yeah, when I look back on it I always start remembering things and thinking "Oh yeah, we did this" and "Oh yeah, we did this." One of the keys though is having people that knew the language and knew the culture and being able to reach into that was important.

CP: Are there any people that we should reflect on from your Hood River days that we haven't talked about?

BS: Like I said, my staff chair was always good. He was gone a long time but he was always kind of involved. Lee Foster was an old time Extension agent here and he was important. And always had good coworkers. And the people on campus were pretty much the same.

CP: When did you retire?

BS: Is it 2009? Yeah, time flies, yeah, I always can't remember, was it 206. Yeah, must've been 2009, in the spring.

CP: OK, just a couple broader questions and finishing up. The first is, if you could talk...we've talked about this already to some degree, but if you could reflect a little bit more on some changes that you've seen within the county in the time that you're here.

BS: Oh...the county...the change of course is the increase of the tourism and resulting in higher prices in housing, concerns with, unless you have a really, really high paying job...you can't afford to live here basically is one of the problems. Agriculture has changed some, it's changed from being pears were king and then we had apples too, not very much apples, but we had the blueberries and now we have the other products like the cideries and the wineries and that. Those are some of the big areas, economics. That's probably the biggest one. It's beautiful place to live if you can afford to live here.

CP: Yeah. Has there been a cultural shift that you've noticed?

BS: Yeah. Probably the biggest cultural shift is the assimilation of the Latino community. [1:00:00] When I first came you'd never see a Latino working anywhere other than the farms. And now they're alongside everybody else. You see 'em everywhere. And some of our outstanding youth are coming through from the Latino side as well as that where before they had little special programs for 'em but in the schools now they're just a part of it. The other thing that's coming forward which is kind of an interesting one is the more green community or the people who are concerned about organic, the local farmer, Gorge Grown, which is an organization that focuses a lot on that. All that's emerged since I've been here.

CP: Hood River, now I could be completely wrong about this, but it's always struck me as being kind of the dividing point between the East and the West, as you are driving down the Gorge, certainly in terms of the way the state actually looks, because it stops raining pretty quickly as you continue heading East, but also culturally on some level. I wonder if that's the sense that you have, as well.

BS: Yeah, I feel that there's...you know there's such a difference between Hood River and The Dalles, you know, people just don't understand that if they haven't been there, but yeah, we're much more yuppie than The Dalles. The things and the interests of the people here. There's always something, someone said this once, and I thought, "Huh?" there's always something going on here in this county, almost every day of the week, definitely every weekend, there's something fun and different going on. Yeah, I agree with you totally on that.

CP: My last question for you, you've been in the midst of the Land Grant mission for your entire career at OSU. I wonder if you could reflect on how it's shifted and what you think might be the future of the land grant mission going forward.

BS: Well, I know they're changing, but I don't know a lot about it. I really haven't had very close ties to the Extension Service ever since I left six years ago or more. I hope they don't lose its...you know, it's always been focused on the people and coming from the people and what the people need, and I think that's what makes it successful, because we have that, and I worry about if they're maybe moving from the grassroots to [pause] I don't know to where, but moving away from the grassroots and I'm a little worried about that, because I'm not sure...if we can survive without having the ESD and I worry about the future of Extension in Oregon.

CP: The discussion about the funding base especially has been...seeing more and more of it.

BS: It is! You know, if your community doesn't see you as an important, intricate part of it and you're just kind of on the edges, then they're not going to support you. There are a lot of good things out there, a lot of people that need money, and if you don't seem important, they're not going to do it. They're not going to support you, and you can't survive without having funding.

CP: Yeah.

BS: And I think that's be...and so we gotta go back to the grassroots people.

CP: Well, Billie I want to thank you for this. I think that it's pretty clear that your work here was very important to the community and I appreciate you sharing your memories with us and contributing to our project.

BS: Thank you, and I hope so, anyway.

CP: Best of luck moving forward.

BS: Yeah, thank you!

[1:04:22]