



The OSU Extension Service Centennial Oral History Collection, August 24, 2007

Title

Len Calvert - Interview 2

Date

August 24, 2007

Location

Calvert residence, Eugene, Oregon.

Summary

In his second interview, Calvert gives a quick summary of his many positions with the Extension Service. He then describes his involvement with 4-H as an agent and as a trustee of the Oregon 4-H Foundation. He details other post-retirement work, including his tenure as editor of the *Journal of Extension*. He then shares his memories of notable Extension members and their achievements. He rounds out the interview with thoughts on the future of Extension.

Interviewee

Len Calvert

Interviewer

Elizabeth Uhlig

Website

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

Transcript

***Note: Interview recorded to audio only.**

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is part three of the Extension Service oral history with Len Calvert. Today is August 24.

Len, to start today, could you talk about the work that you did with the Extension Service. I don't know if you could talk about a typical day, or maybe talk about some of the projects you worked on, and some of the areas and so forth.

Len Calvert: I'm not sure there's a typical day, necessarily. I was hired in the beginning to write, to write news releases. I mean, that was what we did, to extend knowledge through the mass media – that was the goal. As time went on, things were added, things changed. One of the things that changed, was that, I think I was probably the first one in the office to do this - in the 60's, the U.S. Department of Agriculture started a program called Rural Areas Development. And each state was involved, and we had a statewide committee, and J. W. Scheel, who was then the Assistant Director, picked me up and I had to go to the meetings with my tape recorder and record them all, and then I wrote a newsletter called, I don't remember what it was called, anyway, about rural areas development. And that was the first time I had done something like that.

Then later, several years later, we changed and we became, instead of trying to produce a lot of stuff, the information specialists became communication specialists, and we did more consulting, and I started out working with agriculture and a little bit with 4-H.

Then it changed and I was put in charge of, if you want to put it that way, information work with 4-H and home economics. And that was fun, and I wrote news releases, I gave advice on how to do things. And all along from the very beginning, the role of the specialist was to educate the county agents. And so we would do trainings out about the state on how to write news releases, how to take news photographs, and also radio which was important at that time; less important now. In fact, I'm not sure anybody in Extension does radio anymore.

Then, later on it broadened again. I was still writing news releases, but I was also doing a lot of other things, like developing slide shows, which I had not done before, about program areas. I did one about home economics, one about 4-H. The Home Ec one - I was really pleased with it because it was used in some classes in the School of Home Economics.

EU: At OSU?

LC: Yes, Later.

EU: Did you take the photos or the slides for those?

LC: Some of them. Other people in the office took slides also. And that was an interesting experience because one of the things we did was take pictures of children, of young children at a preschool or a daycare center, and we had to develop a permission slip to send home with every kid so we could take their pictures. We didn't identify where the daycare center was or who any of them were, but we still had to do that. Parents were concerned, the other parent if they were divorced, the non-custodial parent knew where the child was. This could cause problems in that age. And so that was sort of different.

Then I got a grant one time to, I can't remember, from the State Department of Education, I think, to do education over television. What we did was produce eight, six or eight half-hour videos on food preservation which were shown on OPB, Oregon Public Broadcasting, two or three times over two or three years and on two or three commercial stations – I don't remember, Medford seems to stick in my mind, but I'm not sure that's true. One of the things that also occurred...

[0:05:35]

EU: For these videos then, did you do the taping?

LC: No, I was the producer. [laughter] No, we had a man in our office who did the filming, Bill Smith, who retired after 30 years with Extension, or whatever it was. He was a 4-H agent in Clackamas County and then came to campus to do

radio with KOAC. KOAC is the forerunner of what's now called Oregon Public Broadcasting and Oregon State had the license for KOAC. And Extension used to do at least an hour, almost an hour a day on KOAC about farm markets, interviews with the specialists, and so forth. Bill did that. Arnold Ebert did it first and then Bill Smith.

EU: Were you involved in producing those too?

LC: No, I didn't do anything with radio. Bill did all that. Then, let's see, where was I going? Oh, I know. [laughter]

EU: I interrupted.

LC: As part of the whole thing, particularly working with the subject matter areas, 4-H and Home Ec, I got involved with the Oregon Extension Homemakers Council and I did some workshops for them on writing. I produced, I wrote with Alberta Johnston the brochures for the Mini-College for Homemakers.

And then I was asked to do more work with the College of Ag – Agriculture - and got very involved with Agricultural Conference Days. I was one of the planners and then we prepared press kits. I mean, this was sort of elaborate. I also did that early on with the Oregon Horticultural Society. I tried, I had Hort. responsibility in the early days, and in those days a lot of agricultural organizations met at Oregon State. They don't do that any more, but in those days they did. And the Hort. Society was a big one. And the first year, I did it, I sort of was trying to figure out what was going on, then I got to the point where I was preparing news releases about most of the speakers before the meetings, and we would send them out for release that day or whatever. And it was a lot of work, but it was sort of fun, and I got acquainted with a lot of growers and specialists and researchers that probably I wouldn't have interacted with.

EU: For someone who doesn't know anything, what's the difference between the Agricultural Conference days and Horticultural Society conferences?

LC: The Oregon Horticultural Society is exactly what it sounds like. It was fruit growers, vegetable growers, you know, nursery crops. Ag Conference Days, Agricultural Conference Day was sponsored by the College of Agriculture and, I'm not quite sure, in a way, it was sort of a public relations things. You know, it was a way of spotlighting some major donors of money to the college. It was a way of offering people a chance to present information. There were dinners – the big dinner was held in Gill Coliseum, which is a big space. And one of the things that first or second year I did Ag Conference Day was also the 75th anniversary of the College, or as it was known then, it was the School of Agriculture. And in its 75th year of the School it became the College of Agriculture, and it was the first school at Oregon State to become a college. Nobody else had done that yet. Now, I think everybody is a college.

[0:10:40]

And that was also when Dean Briskey started what became known as the Diamond Pioneer Award. These are people 74 and older who've made significant contributions to agriculture, their communities, to Oregon State. It recognizes leadership, I guess you could say. And that program is continuing and every year I do the news releases about the people being recognized. I still do that.

Let's see, then it extended more into, I don't know... You served on a lot of committees for Extension, almost all the specialists did. You know, we had an annual conference every year which brought everybody who worked for Extension came to campus for three or four days. I was on those a couple, two or three times. I was co-chair of the 75th Anniversary Committee for Extension's 75th anniversary with Barb Sawyer who was a 4-H specialist. You sort of did all these things.

Then it became a little more political when we started working with the Extension Service Districts, the creation of Extension Service Districts. After the first one, I gave some advice to the person who I was working with on the Crook County one which was the first one in the state. And then I became....Dick Craig, who was, let's see, what was Dick's title then? Was he business manager, something like that. Dick and I became the team that got sent to the counties considering Extension service districts to help them. Dick was very good about the law that they had to follow and things like that, where I was coming along with you got to organize a committee to do this, the agent can't do that...

EU: So, this was the organizing after the elections?

LC: No, before the elections.

EU: Oh, before...

LC: Before the elections. We were always lucky in that the county commissioners could declare a service district. They could simply just say, this is what's going to happen. And the people could always say, no we want to vote on it. Lincoln County did that. They were the only county I think, that I know of, that did that. But then the service district that they established was not activated for a few years because the county budget got better or something and so it wasn't necessary. But then it became necessary to activate the district. What we were voting on then, what people were voting on then was really to establish a tax base for the district.

They could always appeal and we only went through two elections on that, and that was in Curry County. I could be snide and say the retirees in Brookings didn't have enough to do [laughter] but they decided they would appeal this and so we had to have two elections, one to establish the district and one to establish the tax base. And, unfortunately, they come very close together, I mean they were within in a month, six weeks. I can't remember now exactly the time frame, but they were very close. And so what you had to figure out how you were going to do this and, one of the things was, because you had two elections coming both close together and one of the things we did was develop a bumper sticker that said "YES YES.". [laughter] I mean, what do you do. That seemed to be the best solution. Which implied you were going to vote yes twice.

It was very difficult because the agents by law could not advocate. They could offer information, but they could not advocate for a yes vote or no vote. That simply wasn't done or couldn't be done. And even so, you still had some people, like in Wheeler County, the ag agent was out explaining things and he got criticized a couple of times because people thought he was urging "yes" votes. And he really wasn't trying to do that. He was trying to do what he was supposed to do. And so, it's a very delicate line everybody walks. And I was successful until Morrow County. Which I think we talked about before. [laughter]

[0:16:50]

EU: So you must have done a lot of traveling then throughout the state.

LC: Yeah, it was... One memorable trip, it was agent training. H. Joe Meyers, who was then State 4-H Leader, and I went together and we did four or five regional workshops for 4-H agents on communication and that was, those were good sessions. I felt good about them. I actually found a movie to use. Which was an old black and white movie, but it was very good and it was really about, it was supposed to be about writing business letters but it really fit what we were talking about; how you communicate with people. One of the things I always remember was if you are going to say yes, say yes immediately. If somebody asks you to do something, "oh yes, I'd be happy to do that." But if you were going to say no, you start out and you lay out all the reasons before you actually say no. You know, I don't have time, I have previous commitments, so forth and so on; so therefore I can't do this. Which I always thought that was sort of an interesting approach to things.

And it was fun. Agent training was always a chore; well, I shouldn't say that. It was always challenging, let's put it that way. I had fun doing it – well, "fun" may not be the right verb or noun, but it was part of the job, and it had great rewards at times, and there were some agents who would send me things to look at and critique. And this one man, I remember him so well. He didn't write well, but he tried and tried. [laughter] You know, it wasn't that his heart wasn't in the right place. Just, some people just don't write well and it doesn't make any difference what you do. I mean, they aren't going to change. That was sort of fun.

The other thing I did at times was I did some communication training for Extension homemakers, both at the state level and also a couple times at the county level. I remember one time, I was trying to be interesting. You know, all good teachers you're supposed to make their lessons interesting, right? And so I was in Pendleton, and there was a group from Umatilla and this was when, oh, what was his name - Richard Simmons was sort of big and so I started my lesson sort of the way he would. I'm not sure the homemakers appreciated it. [laughter]

EU: This is the exercise guy....

LC: Yes, the exercise... But it was fun to try.

[0:20:40]

EU: You had mentioned that you had worked with Alberta Johnston on the Mini- Colleges for homemakers? Could you talk a little bit about that, and what were the Mini-Colleges?

LC: OK. How many years did we do it? Oh dear, I don't remember. Maybe Alberta will. Extension Homemakers Council represented predominantly women who participated in Extension study groups. They had a state organization, and they raised money, and they did projects and everything like this. They had an annual meeting at Oregon State. And over the years, participation in the annual meeting declined - fewer people were coming.

And so they, everybody was saying, what are we doing to do, and I don't know whose idea it was, maybe it was Alberta's; I don't know who came up with this, that we should offer a mini- college ... what we wound up calling a Mini-College. These were non-credit, there was no credit. The women would come, they could be men, but they were 99.9 percent women, live in the dormitory, take classes from specialists or resident research teachers and sort of get away in a sense.

And, we offered, oh, I've forgotten how many classes, and Alberta was advisor to the counsel and then became coordinator, also coordinated the first two or three Mini-Colleges. I wrote the brochures that were sent to the women and did whatever news coverage there was to do and it was an amazing experience the first two or three years. Because you had what we roughly categorized as serious classes in the morning; these would last two or two and a half hours.

EU: What were the topics of some of these?

LC: Well, it could be money management, it could be nutrition, it could be child development, there was some clothing, I think. Anyway, you did this every day, I mean this particular class, it was done over four days. Then in the afternoon you had a lighter class for say an hour and a half. And those varied in length from two days to three days. That could vary.

Then in the late afternoon, what we called, what did we call them? "Just for Fun" classes, I guess, is what we finally labeled them. These were an hour and a half. They could be flower arrangement, they could be how to prepare fancy hors d'oeuvres, whatever. Many of those, most of these, I think maybe all of the "Just for Fun" classes, were taught by the Extension homemakers themselves. They had some expertise and they would come. And we did that because adult learners are not used to sitting in a classroom all day long. I mean, it's hard work! It's hard work!

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One of the things that was the most satisfying was when you talked to the women, that a surprising number, it was the first time they had ever been away from their families. You think, oh, well, by the '70s, but this group and how important the Extension study group was to them in their lives. This was something they valued highly, they learned a lot from, they were learning things at Mini-College, but the other thing was they were growing, sort of, as individuals, too.

And, finally, we got up to, what, 800 people, maybe about that was the high point and then it declined. And I've always blamed the School of Home Economics, a little bit, for the decline because they got all upset, all concerned that the "Just for Fun" classes weren't academic. So they basically said you can't do that anymore and so they sort of drained the fun out of it and attendance kept decreasing until finally it died or we killed it. I'm not sure which. [laughter] But, I always regretted that because it was a good program. It really was, and I think very valuable to those who came. I'm not sure the council, I guess it is, still exists.

EU: So, I mean, over the years you must have seen these changes in the programs for women. I'm thinking like in relation to like the women's movement and women's place in society, and so. The Extension Service, did it reflect any of those things?

LC: Probably. That's a hard thing to say. Because what was done with the Extension Home Economics programs basically depended upon the specialist, I mean what areas you had specialists in. And, so at one point we had somebody in clothing and textiles, home management and housing, or home furnishings and housing, family life, management, which included money, and foods and nutrition - how could I forget foods and nutrition? And so, the lessons being offered were

developed by the specialists or by the county agents but then reviewed by the specialists. And, so that sort of defined the parameters a lot. I'm sure it changed.

One of the things that we did, or was done, I shouldn't say we did; that was done, was women's financial network – was that what it was called? Anyway, there was a special program for women that dealt with money. And this was co-sponsored with; I think it was AARP as it was known as then – the American Association of Retired Persons. And it was, I think it went over six weeks, once a week for five or six weeks if I recall correctly. And what it was was an effort to try to teach women about finances because even though the modern woman knows all these things, a surprising number don't. They have no idea what investments they have; they have no idea about lots of things because the husbands did it. And not all husbands shared. And what you were trying to do was get the women to think about these things. You need to know because most women will outlive their husbands and you are going to have to make decisions.

[0:30:10]

EU: I think you said that one of the other areas you were most involved with was the 4-H. What kinds of things did you do with or for 4-H?

LC: Well, that was a lot of news writing for 4-H. For instance, we used to do results stories from state fair. Who got blue ribbons, who got red ribbons. And I did that for 25 years. That's a long time for the state fair. Our office was upstairs in the balcony of the 4-H building and it would get very hot. Sometimes, a few times I worked directly with the kids, the young people, doing workshops on community development, sorts of things called community pride programs, that's what they were called then. This was sponsored by Chevron and it gave small grants of money, \$200, \$300, \$500 was probably a lot – to 4-H clubs to do community service. They did things like cemetery cleanups, beautification projects in various places in the community, etc. etc. What we were trying to do was to get them to do was to tell people what they were doing. Don't just take the money and do but also tell.

I went to...for many years, National 4-H Council organized what was called the National 4-H Congress. Which was always held in Chicago. And each state, there were sponsored trips – like Coats and Clark would send one person from each state in clothing. Somebody else, Simplicity, I think, or somebody did one person from each state for style review. So there were rewards and the award was a trip to Congress. And at Congress, some, a few, like six in each area or eight would also be declared national winners and would get like a \$1,000 college scholarship.

I was fortunate to go with the Oregon delegation to Congress the first time I went; oh dear, I don't remember when – maybe 1970 or 1971. And it was incredible! It was simply incredible! We went to ballets; we had Arthur Fiedler conducting the Cleveland Symphony and all these things. The dinners were incredible. [laughter] You had six pieces of silverware on each side! It was a real show. After that, that was probably the highlight or one of the highlight. After that I went back to Congress, four or five times maybe, and worked on the press committee and was somewhat involved with the Oregon delegates. Gradually, it became less and less. The cost became higher and pretty soon it was down to where the Purdue Glee Club was the big attraction. And then they stopped it. It died. Probably, correctly.

And now it was revived as sort of a – I'm not sure what they do. It got revived; it's been in Atlanta and it's been in Memphis, I don't know where it is now, it's been moving around a bit. But they were fun. One of the things that I did was always write the stories about who was going and things like that. One of the things you wanted to make sure, I always wanted to make sure anyway, that the donors were listed because you didn't want the taxpayers thinking their money was being spent to send kids on this trip to Chicago.

[0:35:20]

4-H gave me my first trip to Washington D.C. They were trying, there was a program called National 4-H Conference and each state could send four young people. And so one year, they decided that they were going to have information people come and do things...press releases or whatever. And so I was the one from the west, and it was one of the most exciting trips I have ever had. I was old enough that I thought I would probably never go to Washington, and then I did. And I went with the 4-Hers on their trips around the city and to the monuments, sort of bouncing up and down saying it's real [laughter]. It was incredible, and it was the first time that four kids from Oregon, a couple of them had never flown and

they started talking about getting sick. I was sitting beside one of them....Shut up! Shut up! You know don't do this. And sure enough, they talked themselves into getting air sick.

EU: What year was that, do you remember?

LC: Oh, '64 maybe. Somewhere in there.

EU: What about some changes in the 4-H? I'm thinking about moving into urban areas.

LC: OK. Oregon always claimed that we were the first state to have 4-H in an urban area. I'm not sure we were ever challenged, but I think it's true. Because, 4-H went into the City of Portland in World War I with victory gardens and they've been there ever since, well, until Multnomah County withdrew its funding two or three years ago. And, it was a very interesting situation because for many, many years you had two Extension offices in Multnomah County. One in Gresham which was 4-H, Ag, Home Ec and all the stuff, and one in the City of Portland. The old Couch School which is now part of the Portland State campus. There were two 4-H agents there, and they worked in the city. They weren't in the county, they worked in the city. Duane Johnson was one of the ones out at Gresham for a long time. And eventually they merged. But the funding, the Portland School District actually gave us money, oh, I don't know, it must have been for at least 60 years if not longer, then that stopped when their budgets fell apart, too. For a long time, that was unique as far as I know, at least in Oregon, where a school district was actually contributing, budgeting for 4-H and went to support the City of Portland office. It was not a huge amount of money, but it was nice to have. And then you must admit we were pretty much white which reflected Oregon.

Probably the biggest changes came...Well, let's back up to Home Ec for a second. In about 1980, I think, was when Home Economics had a program going called Young Homemakers. This was for young women. And the decision was made that we should translate English into Spanish, the materials. And one of the things we did, I did, was to go out and find, I found four, I got four newspapers to help. We were providing them a column every month in Spanish which they were running. We did this for three, four, five years or longer.

EU: When did this start?

LC: I think sometime in the '80s. I'm terrible at dates. I remember events, but I don't always remember dates. That was the first time, I think, that Extension had tried to translate on a systematic basis.

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At that same time, there was some movement on the agriculture side to provide training in Spanish for agricultural laborers, particularly in the application of pesticides, herbicides. Then in 4-H, 4-H went around and around on what to do, in a sense. You know, we were working with Blacks - African Americans in Portland pretty well, not superbly, but pretty well. But it was the growing Latino population that was probably the biggest puzzle to us. Do you translate all of the 4-H materials into Spanish? Do you translate part of them into Spanish? We had two or three Extension Agents who went on sabbatical in Central America to study Spanish, I mean that was the primary reason they were down there, because they had growing Latino populations in their counties.

It was hard and I think one of the things that finally developed in 4-H was that you didn't need to translate the member materials – the materials that the kids, the young people themselves would get because almost all of them were going to school, they could understand English, this was not a foreign language. But it was easier for the parents if you translated material for them. Not necessarily because they couldn't read English, but at that time, I mean this was several years ago, it was simply easier for them to understand what you were trying to do. Since I've retired, 4-H has done all sorts of programming and special programming and unique programming for Latino youth.

EU: Speaking of retiring – you're still connected with the 4-H Foundation with Alberta?

LC: Yes, I'm a trustee of the Oregon 4-H Foundation.

EU: How long have you been on the board?

LC: Probably since about 1996 or 1997.

EU: And what kinds of things do you do or does the Board do?

LC: I go to meetings and vote. [laughter] Supposedly, we're supposed to try to help raise money, and the donations to the foundation have skyrocketed. It's amazing. Some of the things I think, in a way, 4-H lives on its past reputation. It's amazing, people who were truly involved with 4-H as youngsters, for six, seven, eight, nine, ten years - a lot of them have very fond memories of that time. Who their leaders were, what their projects were, what they learned. Some have kept their 4-H record books for 50 years. It was a very important part of their lives.

EU: What does the foundation spend the money on? What are your major projects?

LC: Well, our major project has been the 4-H Center for many years. That's now been sort of spun off and now had its own board of directors and is its own entity. But it's still...

[Interrupted by phone call and message. End of part three.]

[0:45:45]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is part four of the interview with Len Calvert. Len, you were talking about your work with the Foundation, the 4-H Foundation, and you were talking about there was a 4-H Center that you were using the money for. Can you talk a little bit about that?

EU: Where was it and

Len Calvert: Actually, you should talk to Alberta. No, the 4-H Center is near Salem in Polk County, west of Salem and that was a major focus of the foundation for a long time because we had to raise money to pay for it, to develop it, so forth and so on. It's now been spun off into its own thing. It's still part of the Foundation but in more of a related way than it has been in the past. A lot of money has been given for scholarships to Oregon State and to other schools for 4-H members, money to develop the center, scholarships, and for leadership programs. We have one grant that is specifically a gift that was designed or given to help leadership programs for 4-H members. So it's been good. Alberta is incredible to do this as a volunteer for how many years now? A long time as the Executive Director. It's sort of nice to be still connected. I've done some news releases for the foundation, not a lot but some.

EU: Some of the other members on the board...is Jack Ross on the board?

LC: No. Ernie Smith who is a former director is a trustee; Martin Zimmerman, who is a retired Extension Agent in Jefferson County, is a trustee; two bankers, at least two bankers, there are various people, some 4-H club leaders, business people, one long time member is a real estate person from Clackamas County...a variety of things, backgrounds and interests, all share this interest in 4-H.

EU: When we were talking before, you had mentioned that Alberta was the first person from Oregon elected, chosen for the...

LC: National 4-H Hall of Fame. Yes. Alberta was the first; Duane Johnson will be the second. Sometime this year, I'm not sure when. But Alberta Johnston was the first one and now Duane. It's a relatively new honor. I'm not sure when it was established, the whole thing, but it's not been many years. Relatively new.

LC: I should say, it's done at the National 4-H Center, which is just across the line from the District of Columbia in Bethesda, Silver Springs, no Chevy Chase in Maryland. But it is very close to the line, just a few blocks away.

EU: Is that the national headquarters then?

LC: No, national headquarters are in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The National 4-H Council is a fundraising arm of 4-H and they offer, they do programming in the Washington D.C. area for 4-H members.

[0:50:25]

EU: You mentioned another organization – if I get this right – National Association of Extension 4-H Agents. And Oregon had a....

LC: Yes, Linda Erickson, who was in Clackamas County at the time as a 4-H agent, was national president. In many respects I think Oregon has been fortunate in the quality of its faculty in that you had Linda as head 4-H agent, Wayne Roberts in Yamhill County and John Hansen from Polk County, both of whom are retired, are past presidents of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. And Duane Johnson will soon be President of Epsilon Sigma Phi. And so we have had national presidents of all but one of the professional organizations.

EU: What about your involvement? For example, with Epsilon Sigma Phi? Because you showed me an award that you received, so I understand you have been active in these national organizations, too.

LC: Well, yes. Probably the one I was most active in was, they keep changing the name, when I first started out it was American Association of Agricultural College Editors...how's that for a mouth full? Or ACE became the acronym. Then it was decided to change the name to Agricultural Communicators in Education. Now it's something else. And so, as a specialist, that was our professional organization. Actually, did we have a national president? Can't remember, huh. Yes, we did. Anyway, and so there were national and regional meetings and so forth and so on. I was chairman of the technical committee on press one year, let's see, I got several awards periodically for various things. And so it was fun. I enjoyed the meetings, I enjoyed exchanging ideas and so forth and so on with the people from other states. I always thought I was sort of fortunate in that respect because I went to 4-H Congress in Chicago, you had interaction with people from other states doing the same thing. Then through ACE; and you made friends. I have some good friends, or did have, from other states, and it was always interesting to hear their experiences and what they did and what we do and the differences.

EU: One of the awards you showed me was for writing. What that from ACE?

LC: Yes, that was from ACE.

EU: You also mentioned you got a staff award from the Extension Service?

LC: Well, several years ago there was an organization created for Extension workers in Oregon. After a couple of stabs at a name, it finally became the OSU Extension Association. And one of the things that the association has done over the years, was honor, there were two awards one was from newer staff, less than five years and then for experienced staff. And, you are nominated for this. I was chairman of the awards committee for a couple of years. And you have specialists and agents come together and they look at all the nominations and select them. And ofte, the person being nominated does not know. That was true in my case, and so when I got an experienced staff award, it meant a great deal. I think everybody who gets them feels that way. It's the acknowledgement of your worth in a sense, from your peers, the people you work with most, and I think it's a neat thing to do. I was president of OSUEA at one point in my career and so it's a good organization.

[0:56:15]

EU: You were also editor of the Journal of Extension?

LC: Yes. That was after I retired. This was not something planned. The Journal of Extension - actually J.W. Scheel was one of the founders who was an assistant director, was one of the founders of the journal. It was not something that I thought we should do, so I become editor 20 years later [laughter]. There's always been a debate in a way about whether Extension is, to use an academic term, is Extension a "discipline". Or is Extension a collection of disciplines. Which I tend to think Extension is a collection of disciplines. You become employed by the Extension Service because you have expertise in livestock or clothing or foods / nutrition or youth development or whatever it is. Not because you are Extension. And so there has always been sort of a tension a little bit about this. And so when the Journal of Extension was first proposed, I thought it was sort of unnecessary, frankly. Because the plant pathologists had their own journal, the entomologists had their own, most academic disciplines have refereed journals. So the proposal was that we should have a refereed journal for Extension. Well, it came to pass, and it was a printed magazine sort of journal for many years and then, let's see, I retired in 1995, probably I think about 1993 the decision was made to make the Journal of Extension electronic and they stopped printing. So, the year I retired, they were looking for a new editor and I sort of put my name in

the hat. What the heck? And they picked somebody else [laughter] which was fine. But the person they had selected was a good evaluator but a lousy editor. She came from an evaluation background. They quickly discovered this was not what they wanted, and they called me and said would it do it?

LC: And I thought, well, okay, why not? It's about half time; I could do it from home; got to do some travelling. Because there were two face-to-face meetings a year and we went to Las Vegas and we went to San Antonio, that was sort of fun. It was really interesting – I have never done anything quite like that before. In some respects I'm probably a technophobe. I was the last one in our office to go to a word processor. I used a manual typewriter for 25 years because electric typewriters and I do not get along. So when I jumped I went from a manual to Wang word processor. So here I am being an editor of an electronic journal. It was good. It worked out really quite well because people who send me their manuscripts electronically, I would send them to the reviewers the same way. The only time I really had to go to paper was when we sent the reviewer comments back. Because they would write on the manuscripts, and so it was easier to do it that way than to do it via computer.

[1:01:15]

EU: So, have you been converted to electronics?

LC: Partially. One of the things you learn very quickly and I sort of stumbled on the first issue is that you cannot trust spell check and you cannot trust things like that and because of the context. Because you spell two but for some reason you only type to, it's says it's correct, which it is! But that's not the to that you wanted. And so I find it, for me, I cannot proofread on the screen. I have to print it out because I just don't think you can proof that way very well. You miss too much. And it's cheaper, I recognize that. One of the advantages of the Journal in this format is that you get the index. What's there. You can choose to print the whole thing or you can choose to print one or two articles. And so if you have no interest in 4-H, you don't have to fool around with those. So, I was fortunate and I think the current editor that followed me, she's still there, is in the same situation that you have...I was in Oregon, the pentacle person was in West Virginia, no, not West Virginia in Virginia, somebody else who was involved was in Ohio, I think, and so you had backup. I did not have to worry about formatting. My job was to get everything edited and put in proper order and so forth and so on. Then I would send the whole thing off to Virginia and Michael then did his magic and did the paging and all that sort of stuff. I still don't do PageMaker. [laughter]

EU: So, the fun part was the content...

LC: Yah, and probably I should learn, but I'm too old. [laughter] I don't think I need to anymore. One of the things...I want to tell you a story...I'll do the group singing.

EU: Yes, I had a question mark, what was group singing?

LC: Okay, it pertains to 4-H and Home Ec. On the agent retreats or conferences, particularly if you were in a sort of semi-isolated place, people would get together and they would have dinner and then you'd sort of sit around in the evening and visit or whatever. Frequently, what happens is they sing. And there are a lot of camp songs and things like that. This crept into annual conference program one year. And the publications specialist in our office hated group singing and proceeded to make his opinion known, that he thought this was completely stupid. So the next Home Economics conference, the county agents got together and decided - Ralph Salisbury was the publications specialist, and he said something about he hadn't done group singing since Sunday School or something like that. There was some reference like that. And so the Home Ec agents got together and made him a tape and they all sang "Yes Jesus Loves Ralph" and sent it to him. And then he sent something back, I can't remember what he did, but this went on for two or three years. It was a great time. Everybody thought it was funny.

EU: I wonder if those tapes were ever saved.

LC: Probably not!

[1:06:30]

EU: One thing, on the wall in your den you had a whole series of posters about Art about Agriculture.

LC: Art about Agriculture.

EU: What was your involvement with that project? They are wonderful posters.

LC: Yes. The images were done by Tom Weeks who is a graphic artist in Extension Communication, very talented. I still think of him as a young man, although he's been there almost 30 years. It was started at the time the College of Agriculture was 75. 1983 was the first one and what we did, Tom designed the images for the first, I don't know how many years, ten or twelve years; I wrote the copy on the back of the poster and the posters were mailed to galleries and artists and things like this and were really the solicitation for entries. And so you had all the rules and regulations and deadlines, entry forms, and an introduction about sort of generally what the subject matter should be or could be.

EU: And so then the artists submitted their work and then they had annual exhibits, is that how it worked?

LC: Yes. It's still going on. It's an annual event, still sponsored by the College of Ag. And what has developed is really interesting is that each year the College buys a certain number of pieces. Sometimes they are sculpture, sometimes they are paintings, sometimes they are drawings, whatever. These have now become a permanent collection within the College of Agriculture. And the annual show also tours. The opening is always at LaSells Stewart Center on campus, and then it goes to various, communities around the state three or four. And the artists agree for the tour and all work is for sale. And there's no commission charged by the College. So if the artist wants \$300 and they sell it for \$300 they get \$300. Which is better than commercial galleries.

EU: You've mentioned a number of times about the 75th anniversary of the Extension. Were you ever interested in writing a history of the Extension to follow up Ballard's history?

LC: Oh, I always said I would and I sort of take stabs at it every so often when I have time. I have good intentions; I may still do it. I didn't plan on being editor of the Journal and some other things and so I've been busier than thought I would be after I retired.

EU: Did you write some shorter histories, though, at that time?

LC: Yes.

EU: That would have been 1986?

LC: Yes. I was co-chair with Barbara Sawyer, who was a 4-H specialist, of the 75th anniversary. So working with Tom Weeks, the graphic artist in Extension Communication, we developed a 75th logo. What else did we do? And we did a poster which was pictures of people who participated in Extension programs over the years. It was a deliberate decision that we would not use pictures of Extension people except three. There were three Extension people that are on the poster. One is Frank Ballard, one is Esther Taskerud, and the other is E.R. Jackman. Because of their tremendous influence not only in Extension but also in the state.

[1:10:35]

EU: Could you briefly tell us those three?

LC: Mr. Ballard was Extension Director for, I don't know how many years. He is an interesting person. He was from New England originally, came to Oregon State as publication specialist, as publication person, editor. I don't remember what happened, or what the intermediate step is. At one time he was President of Oregon State. And then went back or came back to Extension as Director. Mr. Ballard, I think, retired the year before I started in '61, '62. I think he retired about 1960 or '61. He still came into Extension Hall every day, well not every day, but frequently, and sometimes I would have to go talk to him and I was just the new kid on the block and I was probably one of the youngest specialists on campus and I was always sort of afraid of him. He was nice, it wasn't that he was mean or anything, but sort of this big gruff man.

And one of the things that Mr. Ballard did – he did many things – but Oregon became under his leadership very well known for program planning. That was when we did the ten-year planning conferences in the counties, and so forth. And that became one of our hallmarks under him.

There are many funny stories about Mr. Ballard. Or at least I always thought they were funny. Bob Every who was an Extension entomology specialist, now dead. Anyway, Mr. Ballard travelled by train whenever possible. That was his favorite. He was going east and Bob was working in Montana for I think the Forest Service if I remember correctly and had applied for a job at Oregon State. And Mr. Ballard said, "I'm coming, you get on the train in Havre" and that's where he did the interview while they went across Montana. Bob always talked about it because Mr. Ballard was not talkative and Bob would talk and Mr. Ballard would go, "hum." Or nothing...and Bob would talk some more, and thought this was not going well until he was ready to get off the train and Mr. Ballard said I'll see you in Corvallis on such and such a date.

He interviewed Esther Taskerud in a hotel lobby I think in St. Louis or someplace like that. He was very blunt, I guess would be the term.

His funeral was huge. I went to his funeral and it was very large.

[1:15:35]

E.R. Jackman is sort of the patron saint of Extension in a sense. I don't know if that's what I should call him. He goes on because there is the E.R. Jackman funds that are still being raised in his name. Mr. Jackman was an Extension specialist for 35 years maybe, a long time, in what was called then Farm Crops and was instrumental in doing many, many things. He helped establish the grass seed industry in the Willamette Valley; he helped organize the Oregon Wheat League. Then in his later years he was range specialist which was then part of that department, now they have their own department. He knew everybody in the world, and just did a lot of amazing things...like many early people in organizations do because nobody has done them before. Nice man. Very excellent writer.

He was still alive when I moved to Corvallis in '61 and would come up to our office every so often, but I didn't know him well. After he retired, well while he was still working, he wrote an article about Burns, Oregon which at that time was a sort of unique western town, and it was published by the *Saturday Evening Post*, which was a big deal then. It truly was. Then after he retired, no or was it before, anyway, he co-authored a book called *Golden Cattle Country* about the early days in Grant County with Herman Oliver who was a banker and rancher in John Day. He wrote the text for a coffee table type book called *Steens Mountain* with John Sharff who was long time manager of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in Burns. He also wrote something else. I don't remember. But he left a substantial legacy.

LC: Esther Taskerud was hired first by Mr. Ballard as a 4-H Specialist and then became program leader for Home Economics. And Esther was one of the world's great people. People loved Esther – including me. Kind, progressive, supportive, sort of all the good words, you know? And when she was program leader she would go - the Extension homemakers used to have county homemaker days, or something like that and she often was asked to come speak and things like this. One of her hallmarks - in those days you have to realize, home economists had a certain image. While Esther didn't always fit the image but one of the things she did was she had a collection of hats so she sort of became famous for what hat will Esther have today, that sort of thing. She was honored, she got an outstanding alumnus award from South Dakota State University, no it was an honorary doctorate from South Dakota State which is where she grew up – I think it was South Dakota State – you might double check that with Alberta. It was either North or South, I think it was South. And that was a big deal for her; it was a very nice honor. She was just a force that touched the lives of a lot of people.

And so we decided that those three should be on the poster. We did a newsletter for the staff called "Diamond Points." Which I thought was clever. Some of the county agents really did a lot in celebration. Lane County had a 75- foot long birthday cake at Valley River Center, which was great. In Linn County the 4-H agent went back through their annual reports and photography archives and produced a calendar with a different picture for each month, sort of over the years of 4-H in Linn County and things like that. It was sort of fun.

[1:20:45]

EU: You mentioned when we were talking before that you have donated or brought a lot of things to the Archives at OSU about Extension and you said you have some files here. It seems the importance of collecting original resources and preserving these is important.

LC: Yes, I think it is. I was always very proud, I guess proud is the right word, to work for Extension. I think we did good things, a lot of good things. At times it was very exciting. And I think it's important that some of these things survive. And I don't know how unless people do things to make sure they do survive, they won't. For instance, all the years I worked, every publication says this is authorized, this is in accordance with the Smith Lever Act of 1914 which authorized the Extension Service nationally. I never knew what the Smith Lever Act actually said until after I retired when somebody had an old county agents handbook from the very early years, and shared it with me. And in it, was a copy of the Smith Lever Act, which wasn't very long. It's fairly short as things go. And so, it said agriculture and domestic science, I think was the term....

EU: As we look forward, then to the 100th anniversary, I wonder if people will be encouraging you to write more about the history?

LC: Oh, probably, [laughter] probably. I might stab at writing the history. I decided I would start with news releases that have been written over the years and I've done, boy, ten years or so of notetaking and stuff from that. It's fascinating to see what was done.

For instance, we used to work very closely with some of the USDA agencies, like Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service...talk about names! ASCS. One of the Assistant Directors for the Extension Service served on the state committee. Their county office managers would often come to our training sessions for county agents on communications, and I wrote stories about ASCS stuff at times, what they had done. So, that has all sort of stopped, I think. I don't think there's much – partly because of changes in Extension and partly because of changes in USDA. ASCS doesn't even exist anymore. I think it's part of another agency or they have changed their name, or combined things.

[1:25:53]

EU: Here's a real broad question, if you would write about the hundredth anniversary, what do you think is the lasting legacy of the Extension Service? What would you write about; what would you want to emphasize about the history?

LC: I've thought about this a lot because I tried to figure out if I ever get to it, how would you organize it? You could do it chronologically, you could do it by program, you could do it, and there are different approaches. Lasting legacies....one, I think, is the organization of the agricultural groups, the commodity groups...like the Wheat League, Western Oregon Livestock Associations, some of these groups, that continue to be very strong...I think that's one of the lasting legacies.

LC: For some of the older people, not necessarily the young women, but the older women, we were very important to them in teaching nutrition, how you did things. There was one woman that always said if it hadn't been for Extension she would never have made it through the 1930s.

And, in fact, one of the things that we did – I went to a national communications meeting for Home Ec in Kansas City, must have been about 1981, somewhere right along in there, that the USDA people did and we were urged to make a big bang or something like that [laughter]...and after I got home things were not going well. There was sort of an economic downturn in the state and I managed to capture a whole page in the Oregonian with what we were doing to help families economize with food or clothing or whatever and what we were teaching and so forth. That will never happen again. They have abolished the School of Home Ec; that sort of thing probably will never happen again.

And I guess, leadership, I think the young people who have been officers of 4-H Clubs who learned out to do what we used to call demonstrations, we now call presentations, where you tell others what you've learned about a subject, the women who had to teach in the Extension study groups, the monthly meetings, who had never done anything like this and even some of the agricultural producers too, who became leaders in their groups, their organizations, probably in spite of themselves in a way, but that became - I think that's important. I think Mr. Ballard in his book, his manuscript – we keep calling it a book, it really isn't a book – it's a rough draft that was done on yellow paper, I think, with notes and stuff. It was never finished....I mean...it has a lot of good information. He talks about leadership. And it's probably a good thing to talk about.

[1:30:35]

LC: But, I mean, there's always the basics that we taught people how to farm better, how to market their products better, but some of that passes. There are things that we did, I wrote about, I wrote stories about how to use DDT, well, that was the state of the knowledge then. Unfortunately sometimes, or fortunately, I guess, the knowledge changes with time. There were consequences that nobody could have foreseen – a lot of this stuff particularly in the ag chemical field – it's very different, it has changed extensively. You don't just apply chemicals, you have to be licensed, you have to be trained, you have to pass tests.

So you have to look at other things I think – the intangibles and sometimes it's hard to prove. I always felt at times, Home Economics often had a difficult time at the Legislature. They never understood, or whatever, you know? And part of the problem they had, 4-H escaped because everybody says, "Oh, it's for the youth," you know, it's for the kids so 4-H is good. And it is! I say that cynically, but it is good. I always thought Home Economics was good. The problem was that when you go to things like Congress and Legislatures, the ag people can always say well look, we've increased production this much and we've added this much value to the state's economy and so forth and so on. Home Economics can never do that because you couldn't quantify their subject matter by dollars. I mean, it was always really difficult to demonstrate in terms that most people wanted you to demonstrate it.

LC: Government tends to demonstrate everything by dollars. The college graduate earns so much more over this lifetime than the non-college graduate earns in hers. Okay, you are talking about dollars, you aren't talking about development of the person. It's sort of like the Liberal Arts graduates, you know, it's always hard to defend Liberal Arts, in a way. Because what dollar value does an English degree have? Well, my kid has an English degree and I've learned a great deal [laughter]. No, I mean, the department, the school he went to had developed a really interesting list of what their graduates were doing. They were law clerks, they were analysts at this or that, I mean using the skills that they learned. And so I think that's the thing about Extension – probably the lasting impacts are intangible.

[1:35:00]

EU: Well, hearing you talk and researching about the Extension Service and looking forward to a hundred years – it's survived actually for a hundred years being able to change with the times and responding to economic and social and historical changes.

LC: And it has survived, truly, because the people wanted it. Not necessarily because of the universities, but because people value what Extension does. Everybody knows about Master Gardeners.

EU: Well, just the other day, yesterday? In the *Register Guard* there was an article about this yellow –

LC: Star Thistle! Yes, it's been found in Western Oregon....

EU: And if you wanted more information, call the Extension agent!

LC: That's right and yellow star thistle is not fun; it's a serious weed and it was always east of the mountains, it was never west. That's why all the publicity. And it can be fatal to livestock. It's the resource for lots of things.

One county commissioner one time said that supporting Extension was sort of nice, because it was for the middle class. But it sort of is. You don't have to be poor, you don't have to be rich, you don't have to be anything to use Extension except wanting to know what they know. The proverbial circle is the farmer has a problem, he tells the agent, who tells the researcher, who tells the agent what he found, who tells the farmer. That's the ideal Extension program in some respects. The people have a problem, the agent identifies the problem, who tells the researcher we need answers, researcher gets the answers, tells the agent, who tells the people.

EU: And that will continue to be needed for the next 50, the next 100 years.

LC: The question is, will the governments continue to support it? If the budgets continue to be so tight it's going to be tricky as to what happens. If you are a county commissioner, I feel sorry for them, I really do. If I have to choose between giving money for an Extension office in my county and abolishing the Health Department, these are hard choices that I think government officials are making, and you aren't going to please everybody [laughter].

EU: Well, are there other things I've forgotten to ask about? Other things we should be talking about?

LC: One of the things, well, I had actually thought of something...As Sue Bowman will tell you, I'm always thinking of something, that's for you Sue [Sue Bowman is the transcriber of the oral history]...One of the things that was developed was called the PNW publication series (Pacific Northwest). It was Oregon, Washington and Idaho, and I believe this was the first interstate cooperative publishing in Extension and probably started more than 25 years before I retired. You might ask, somebody should ask the current publication specialist, Evie, if it's still going – I'm not sure what its present status is. But this was designed because the three states shared certain characteristics. And so, what would happen is, the process is this way --- the subject matter specialist would write a bulletin, say on apple maggot. He would send it to Extension Communications to the publication specialist, and he would propose it as a PNW publication. So then the manuscript would go to Washington and Idaho, and their specialists would review it and say "yes, we could use this". Oregon would publish it but it would be distributed in all three states. And it was seen as a cost saving. And it truly was. Rather than each state reinventing the wheel each time. The downside of the process was that it sometimes too awhile to work through the system but the outcome, I think, was right. And so you had the three states sharing a lot of things. And there was no reason not to. And the Extension editors or publication specialists would meet, I think twice a year and go over things – what do you need, what do we need, what do you have to offer? Do you think your people want it - that sort of thing. I think we were the first ones in the United States to do that.

LC: You know, a person who is not on your list that should have been is Jean Scheel.

EU: Thank you very much for these interviews.

[1:42:50; End of Part 4]

Elizabeth Uhlig: Len you wanted to add a few minutes.

Len Calvert: Well, one of the things that I think every government agency faces and Extension has always wanted to do things the least expensive way possible, okay? And sometimes that gets in the way. But we've always been pretty frugal. But one of the things that every agency faces is perception on the part of the public that you are wasting the taxpayer's money or you spent too much time on this, or whatever. That becomes a real problem for agencies like Extension which deal a lot with publications and presentations as part of their educational mission. So, it's always a fine line when you are designing publications or picking papers, all the things that go into a publication that it not appear too expensive. You know, because people will say "you spent all this money; you're wasting the money." It's always tricky a little bit on what you do or don't do. Or how you do it, I should say.

The only other thing I would say is that I think I'm right that there is only three times in Extension, so far, where a child has followed the father into Extension. Ralph Hart was an ag agent in Union County for many years, he son became a 4-H agent, Doug and I understand he is now moving into administration; Doug Hart is. Gordon Cook, who recently retired from Union County, was the son of Clive Cook who was a long time ag agent in Clackamas County and Gordon was the first one to follow a father into Extension. I've always thought that was interesting that they did this because Extension Agents and Specialists work very hard. I should say "worked." I don't know what they do now. (Laughter). The agents are often gone – they aren't home. There's night meetings, there's weekend activities; I mean it's not a 40 hour week. In fact, we used to have to keep track of our time and one year I did it. I decided, okay, I'm really going to record how much time I actually spent. And then it got flattened to 40 hours anyway.

[1:46:26]

Extension work is not a 40 hour week and 4-H particularly, is very demanding. It truly is. Earl Jose, he was an agent in Jackson County, his daughter became an agent in Crook County for a short time.

EU: And then your wife Janet worked for the Extension Service.

LC: Yes. She was a 4-H agent in Malheur when we met. And then I took her away. Then, a couple of times after we moved to Eugene in 1965 there were a couple of times when she was a temporary Extension agent in Lane County when somebody was on leave. She filled in for a few months while they were gone. And then I guess when our kids started going to college we figured we needed the money she became a 4-H program assistant in Corvallis and did State Fair

and some other things. Then there was an opening in Lane County and she applied and became a permanent agent here in Lane County and then the last ten years she worked she was staff chair in Lane County as well as doing nutrition. She started out here basically working with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program which is a federally funded program for low income families that teaches nutrition. I retired in 1995 and she retired in 2000, I think. This was not where I started out to go, but she always wanted to be an agent. That was her goal as an undergraduate, to be an Extension agent.

EU: Any more ps psss?

LC: Well, I could say, no I won't say. Ummmm, there's probably a lot of things but some things you probably don't want to know.

EU: We can always do a follow up.

EU: Thank you very much.

[1:50:10]