



The OSU Extension Service Centennial Oral History Collection, November 3, 2007

Title

John Hansen

Date

November 3, 2007

Location

Hansen residence, Dallas, Oregon.

Summary

Hansen describes his childhood on a dairy farm near Beaverton, Oregon, his early involvement in 4-H, and his experiences at Oregon State College. He then details his work with the Marion County Agricultural Conservation Association before describing his entrance into Extension Service as a 4-H agent. Hansen discusses his promotion to chairman of the Polk County Extension staff and his work in that position. From there, he reviews his time as an area Extension Water Resource Specialist and his involvement with national and state professional organizations. He talks about his position as an assistant administrator of a division of the Oregon Department of Agriculture and he also describes his travel with agricultural study tours, the creation of an arboretum in Dallas, Oregon, his involvement with the 4-H Foundation, and his volunteer work in Dallas, Oregon.

Interviewee

John Hansen

Interviewer

Elizabeth Uhlig

Website

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

Transcript

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

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is an oral history interview for the Extension Service project. Today we're talking with John Hansen and we're in his home in Dallas, Oregon. Today is November 3, 2007, and my name is Elizabeth Uhlig.

John, I think you said that just recently you were elected to the Hall of Fame?

John Hansen: Yes, the National Association of County Agricultural Agents started in 2006 the Hall of Fame, and they select one person from each of the four regions in the United States. And the Oregon county agents group urged me to apply and so this summer at their national meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I was awarded membership in the Hall of Fame representing the western region which is thirteen western states.

EU: What was the criteria for this selection?

JH: Well, there was actually about three major parts. One was in my work as a county Extension agent, and that was attested to by a couple of three good friends in the county. And then my work with the state association of agents and the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. And the third part was community service, which they call "above and beyond the Extension". Which included, oh, working with the local arboretum, being a member of the Polk County Fair Foundation Board, a member of the, and actually chairman at one time of the village retirement group we have here in the city of Dallas, their fair foundation, and work with some of our major contributions and participation with the 4-H Center and other 4-H activities here in Polk County.

EU: So I think we're going to have a lot to talk about today to cover these three areas. But what I promised - I should explain John has on his orange sweater and there's an OSU Beaver [football] game this afternoon.

JH: Correct.

EU: We don't want to run into that.

So, why don't we get started? John, could you tell us where you were born and when you were born?

JH: Oh, I was born in 1918 in Washington County, about five miles north of Beaverton. I attended the Union Grade School and Beaverton High School. Grew up on an 80 acre dairy farm and so learned to work pretty early in life.

EU: This farm, had been in your family for a while?

JH: Well, my father acquired it when they first got married, just a year or so before I was born and he rented it from his father. But he was -- I was born when he was in France in World War I and then he was sent home early because he had been drafted and should have been left at home on the farm apparently. So I have the title as the second war baby in Washington County, I found out when I was twenty-five years old.

EU: Where is your family from -- your grandparents?

JH: Well, my grandparents on my mother's side came from Switzerland. They came as teenagers; they were orphans. They came here to this country, my grandfather and his two sisters because of friends and some relatives had come to this country. On my father's side both my grandmother and grandfather came from Denmark as teenagers. Both of my grandparents met in Portland and were married in Oregon.

EU: Do you know why they chose to come to Oregon?

JH: Oh, I'm not sure, because - I have this kind of favorite story. My father's [grand] father, my grandfather on my father's side spent the winter in Minnesota and my other grandfather spent a winter in Wisconsin and the joke is that they gave up and came to Oregon to enjoy a better climate.

EU: So – what is your full name?

JH: Niels John Hansen is my two grandfathers' names, but I go by N. John and that's how people have known me throughout my work in Extension and everywhere else.

EU: Is there a story behind how you selected your name?

JH: Ya, there is a story. When I was a student at Oregon State I had an opportunity to work a couple, three mornings at the Southern Pacific Freight Depot and apparently I signed my name three different ways and the freight agent came to me a week or so later and said, "I have to get this straightened out or we can't pay you." And so he did and then he gave me this advice. He said, "Young man, from now on sign your name one way and one way only the rest of your life and you won't have this kind of trouble."

EU: And then you chose John, then.

JH: Well, John...I was known as John, but I put the N. John.

[0:05:35]

EU: Growing up on the dairy farm, then, were you involved with 4-H as a child?

JH: Very much. I can still remember the day when I was in grade school, in the 4th grade, was nine years old I guess, and Bill Cyrus, our county agent, came to the school and talked about 4-H work and said that there was a local dairyman that would be our 4-H leader. And so a group of six boys decided we'd like to be in a 4-H club. That was my start in 4-H club work in 1927.

EU: How long were you involved then?

JH: I was involved about ten years as a 4-H member. And I had dairy, swine, crops, record keeping, and a number of other projects. I was quite an active 4-H member. I really liked my 4-H member work and my parents were very supportive of my 4-H work.

EU: Did you also do news writing?

JH: Well, as part of that they had a state news writing contest and the editor of the Beaverton paper and I was visiting with him one day, and he said, well we need some local news, 4-H news. So I took that on as a project and ended up for three different years I was the state 4-H news writing champion. Which really helped me when I was a 4-H agent because I did a lot of news writing then. I go back to my experience working with that editor.

EU: You were so active in 4-H, did you think at that time that might become a career for you?

JH: Along the way, yes, I got really interested by working with our Extension staff and went to 4-H Summer School, which I did about five or six times at Oregon State.

EU: Could you talk about that? What is the Summer School?

JH: At that time 4-H Summer School was two weeks for 4-H work and we had normally had to win a scholarship somehow like I did in the news writing contest or be selected to be a representative. That is a gathering of 4-H members from all over the state of Oregon for two weeks at Oregon State. And that certainly was my introduction and some of my encouragement, as well as encouragement directly from staff members at Oregon State.

EU: What did you like best about 4-H?

JH: Oh, I think meeting other kids, working with them, and I exhibited at the Oregon State Fair and at the Pacific International Livestock Show as well as the Washington County Fair. And it was just part of life, and I really enjoyed all of my 4-H work.

EU: So it seems, as I do some of these interviews, it just seems that there's just a real strong personal connection, from workers, agents, to specialists in Corvallis. It seems that started very young with you – this mentoring process.

JH: It really did, because our county Extension agents were very helpful and I was close to them. And in fact one of my projects was growing seed corn, an acre of seed corn. And which actually I sold to the bank in Hillsboro that sponsored a 4-H corn growing contest. But one of the crop specialists in Oregon State was the one that certified the seed. So I had contact with others than just the local Extension agent.

[0:09:40]

EU: Where did you go to college?

JH: Oregon State. I enrolled in 1936. And started out in Dairy Manufacturing. Why, I don't know but after a year or so I decided that was not my field and I transferred then to Agricultural Economics with a major in Farm Management and a minor in Business which is what I graduated in.

EU: When did you graduate?

JH: 1941.

EU: When you were in college, did you have support from your parents? Or did you put yourself through, working, through college? It was during the Depression.

JH: Yes, well, I basically worked my way through college. We had, first, as a freshman we had a college employment service and the way you got a job was that as you lined up at 5:00 o'clock on Monday mornings to sign up for that week. And they gave you odd jobs, like mowing a lawn or whatever somebody wanted some help. That's how I got my first jobs – I earned money that way. But my folks helped me some, but there wasn't much in those days. We were just coming out of the Depression. And, so, really, basically I made my own way, working all those times through school. That's why it took a little, extra couple terms.

EU: And was it at school that you met your wife, Ruth?

JH: Yes, that was on February 2, 1937, in a snowstorm. Would you believe Corvallis, Oregon, had two feet of snow, and they closed down the college for the day. And a good friend of mine, actually a near relative, had a girlfriend in a girls' co-op house and he said, let's go over and see the girls and that's where I met Ruth.

EU: What was Ruth studying?

JH: She was a secretarial science student.

EU: So, what was your first job when you came of the university?

JH: My first job was with the Marion County Agricultural Conservation Association, which was what we called the Triple A Program. It made farm payments and wheat allotments and that type of work. And that was, I had actually worked the summer before for this Washington County group doing a seed purchase program. And so I had some experience with them, and I was offered this position actually before I graduated.

EU: How did that come about?

JH: Well, the opening was in early February, and I still had twelve credits to do in Winter Term. But they asked me if I would be interested in a job, and I said, "Sure, but I'm in school yet." And they said, well, you go see the dean, we've talked to him. Well, I talked to Dean Schoenfeld, and he said if I could get my classes assignments for the twelve credits I was working on, I could finish up outside, and if I promised to graduate in June, I could be released. And I was released and so in early February I started my first job and still studied books in school.

EU: Could you talk a little bit more about – you said you worked with the wheat allotments?

JH: Yes, they had wheat allotments and other conservation practices. And then, of course, we got early on into the World War II. And then became part of the work was also working on farm deferments, getting information for draft boards also on farm machinery rationing and other types of board efforts. In fact I spent part of my time working with the Extension agent going out to the demonstrations and meetings and on savings and how to do things with the shortages we had during the war.

EU: Did you get a deferment from your draft board?

JH: Yah, I was deferred because of a family deferment for a number of years, and then later in early '45, I was called in for induction into the service. And Oregon State asked for a six-month deferment – I was 4-H agent then in Linn County, and which was approved and happened to be up the day Japan surrendered. So I was never called into service.

[0:15:00]

EU: You said, you were a 4-H agent in Linn County?

JH: That's right. I moved there in 1943. Took the position I was offered as 4-H agent in Linn County, which was a very strong 4-H county. We had about 900 to 1,000 members. I was there six years and when I left there we had about 1,500 4-H members in the county.

EU: So you moved to Albany then?

JH: That was in Albany.

EU: What kind of programs did you work on in Linn County?

JH: Well, I was strictly a 4-H agent so I was out recruiting 4-H members, 4-H local leaders, training local 4-H leaders, and holding county fair type of activities. We didn't have a county fair in Linn County; we had just a 4-H youth fair at that time. And so in the fall we had for that for livestock and then in the spring we held at the high school, we had a fair for all home economics and health projects and other 4-H projects.

One of the ways that we recruited in those days – it was still the days of the one and two-room schools all over the county and I visited every school in the county. And we had good encouragement from our county school superintendent, too, to do that.

EU: So you judged in these – you were - did you judge the 4-H projects?

JH: No, I was – I judged in other counties. I would go to another county to judge, but not in our local county.

EU: You couldn't... Did you have many interactions then with agents from other counties?

JH: Oh, yes. We of course met at Oregon State for our annual conference and other training sessions. And we had particularly here in the Willamette Valley, we were close together, we worked together on a lot of different projects.

EU: You were in Linn County for six years?

JH: Six years.

EU: OK. And then where did you go?

JH: Then I was promoted to chairman of the Polk County Extension staff here in Dallas. And, which was to me a prize because I've always wanted to be in either Polk or Yamhill Counties, somewhere was my choice. And I was fortunate that I was selected for this position. It's kind of interesting. I had a local livestock committee visited with me. And they made the approval before going to the county court to make the appointment, as I understand it. It was kind of interesting.

But I was fortunate to come to Dallas, for two reasons. Ruth, my wife, is from Dallas and so we got to go to her hometown.

EU: And what was the other? You said there were two reasons?

JH: Oh, it was my choice. It was one of the counties in the state I had been looking for.

EU: So you said you were chairman of the Extension Service in Polk County. What exactly did that encompass?

JH: Well, I was in charge of the office and the Extension staff, and at that time we had a Home Extension agent and an assistant county agent. The assistant county agent was devoting about 90 per cent of his time to 4-H club work. And then a full-time secretary. Then the staff, of course, over the period of time I was here, grew to the point that we had additional agents. And we extended our program more.

EU: What were some of those programs that were added over the years?

JH: Well, for example, the first move we made was this. At that time we had quite a bit of horticultural production in the county, and I think some of the farmers realized I didn't know as much about horticulture maybe as I should have. But anyhow, they urged that we get a horticultural agent, a trained agent. And we did. The county court approved the necessary expenses to cooperate with Oregon State. And we appointed a horticultural agent.

And then the staff grew further, with, at one time we had a livestock agent got added because of our livestock activities in the county. And then we added in our Home Economics program in later years, we moved into what we call the low income nutrition program, and so we had a part-time assistant for the Home Extension agent. And also this person helped train local leaders out in the community on homemaking, business, and living business for people who were of low income; that was the emphasis of our program. We also at one time for a while also had a farm management program specialist working primarily with small farms in the county.

[0:20:30]

EU: Before we talk a little more specifically about some of the programs you worked on, could you ... What did you like about working for the Extension Service? What was your theory?

JH: Oh, my theory of the Extension Service was that we were here in the county to help people help themselves. My best part of working Extension was the direct working with local citizens on community problems or on their agriculture or whatever the programs were. I devoted, as staff grew, I devoted more time to working on community development and problems of the county that people were interested in trying to work on. And helping out wherever we could in organizing study committees or whatever the project called for.

EU: How did you decide which projects to work on?

JH: Well, there is the domestic water program, for example. We had a group of farmers in the Luckiamute area here who were having flooding problems in the winter and they were concerned about it. And they were interested and so I worked with them in contacting the Corps of Army Engineers to make a study of the valley. And they helped us to do that. And in that process I always heard all these farmers saying we don't have enough domestic water. And so I insisted that in that particular survey we add a question about the domestic supply of water – their well water, was it adequate, or good or bad or what. And we found that about 90% did not have enough water. And so out of that grew a project we started to work on again organizing a local committee in the Luckiamute area and made a complete study of the domestic water situation. And then applied to the Farmers Home Administration for a loan and worked towards developing a cooperative water district for the rural area.

We found this to be a problem not only in the Luckiamute area but all over the county. And so as a result today there are six domestic water cooperatives in the county serving about 80% of the rural area of the county with a domestic water supply.

EU: Why was water such a problem here in Polk County?

JH: I don't know why exactly geographically, there just wasn't much water. If you drill a well you might get three or four gallons a minute, which wasn't very much. And then we had other problems. And which is pretty typical to Polk

County. When you go north to Yamhill County there's more underground water, and as you go south into Benton County it becomes a better situation. But here we are geographically located and the situation had a problem.

EU: When we were talking before you mentioned that in 1972 you were promoted to area Extension Water Resource Specialist for the Extension Service.

JH: That's right. There was a position when I was stationed in Salem I actually had a desk in the State Water Resources Board but I was an Extension Agent and I worked with all of the Extension in all of the counties in the Willamette Valley. And my role was working with the local Extension staff on any water development problems, which could be drainage, or could be bigger supply, or could be irrigation, or whatever the situation was. I was actually serving as a specialist of Oregon State University Extension Service on a more localized basis.

[0:24:45]

EU: Getting back to – you said one thing you enjoyed was working with the people and helping them to help themselves.

JH: Right.

EU: Are there some stories related to that – can you give us some examples of working with the farmers?

JH: Now, I think one in particular. A young farmer in the county, during the, oh, this was probably in the mid-'50s. Oregon State had developed new short straw wheat called Gaines wheat. And they had it down at the experiment station. And one day, Rex Warren, the crop specialist, contacted me and said we need to expand the seed supply and we'd like to cooperate with some farmer in the county. And so I said, well, I think I know one we might work with.

So we ended up, Rex and I visited this farmer and told him about what we had in mind. And he said, oh, he was interested because he had seen the plots at Oregon State at a field day the year before. And I said, well, there's a catch to this, because at that time the wheat we were growing we would plant about 80 to 90 pounds per acre. And it was tall straw wheat; well this was new short straw wheat. And we said there's a catch, you'd get a hundred pounds of seed but you have to plant five acres. And he looked at me and said, "You're crazy. That's twenty pounds to the acre; we plant 80 to 90 pounds." But Rex Warren said well, that's the way it is because we want to expand the seed supply.

Well, anyhow, we negotiated with the farmer, and we said you have to follow prescription, and planting, and also fertilizing. And he said, well how am I going to do twenty pounds per acre? Well, was said, let's look at your drill; he had a fairly new drill. And Rex said well we'll set the drill at forty pounds, and the farmer said, well, that's not twenty pounds. And Rex said, no we'll just plug up every other hole in the drill. And so we did. And anyhow, he followed the prescription, did everything as we asked, and he ended up with the largest wheat crop per acre he ever had; 90 bushels per acre. And we made a believer out of this farmer and all of his neighbors. And it also resulted with this new type of wheat that we could reduce the seeding rate considerably. So it was a wonderful demonstration. But this farmer was the one that actually did the work and followed through for us. That's the way we cooperated, and they cooperated with us. It was a wonderful program.

EU: Did you spend a lot of your time then going around the county talking to different farmers?

JH: Probably not as much as I should have. That was what farmers really liked, if you could visit their farm. And you know, people, they not only liked to share their problems with you, they shared successes, and so that's also part of the program. But that was some of the things we did, was move information from one farm to another by knowing what was happening or some new experience. And then also we used, in the county we had a young farmers group. And we had monthly meetings. And a lot of this information was also transported back and forth between farmers through this medium of this meeting. So we used group work as well as individual work.

EU: When you worked with individuals, you had to be sensitive, I suppose, to their personalities, their ways of doing things.

JH: Yah, I can think of an example. We had, I had a phone call to make a farm visit on an alfalfa field, there was a new planting that wasn't doing too good. And so I stopped by one morning and this farmer came to the door and came out

and said, "What are you here for?" And I said, "Well, I had this telephone call, and it said you had a problem with your alfalfa." Turned out later his wife had called the office. But anyhow, he said, oh, I don't know if you can help me or not. So I said, well, OK, I've got five more calls out in this community. I'll just get in my car and go on my way. Oh, he said, come on, let's go look at it, maybe you can see what's wrong. Well, it was obvious that the newly planted field needed borated phosphate. So I explained to him what it needed. But I said, "Here's the problem - we're in April, and if we get adequate rain in April and May, if you put phosphate on it right now, it'll help it. If you don't get much rain, you won't get much help from it, since it's a gamble for you in that way." But I said it will help the plant if we get the rain. But fortunately that was one of those wet springs, and everything worked fine. And he became one of my great supporters in that community.

[0:30:15]

EU: So it seems these personal relations were what was successful for the farmers and for the Extension Service.

JH: It's very important, yes. That was an important part of our work. They had some faith in you, and you also had to have faith in them. I've always said I learned more from the farmers than I learned from the book.

EU: Over the years do you think there's been a change in that relationship between the agent and the farmers?

JH: Yes, there's a change because of the changing times and the types of activities. For example, we were a county with a lot of small farms. A large farm here would be 300 acres. Well, today with the grass seed production and some of the other things they do, you're talking maybe 2,000 acres of operation. And you have a different relationship. And also in the agricultural community, you have your co-op and your field services. But there is still a very close relationship between Extension and the people out in the field, but it's in a different way. You don't have as quite as, probably not as much direct contact as we had back in what we called the good old days.

EU: Do you think that change was the same with other - with the Home Ec and the 4-H?

JH: Not to the same extent because 4-H is still family oriented, and with the Home Economics, too, it's working with the homemakers. Then they have the Home Economics clubs and so forth, which they use as an educational program. But then the 4-H group is still a family affair of interested 4-H work and the local 4H clubs with the local 4H leader. And so the system is still more of the same for that particular part of the Extension, which is also a significant part of the Extension program.

EU: Let's take a break.

JH: OK.

EU: This is the end of part 1.

JH: We're doing all right?

EU: We're doing fine.

[0:32:35]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is part 2 of the oral history with John Hansen.

John, I think I'd like to turn now and talk about the different programs you were involved with, the crops and things when you were an agent here in Polk County. Maybe you could talk about the prunes; you said your wife grew up on a prune farm.

John Hansen: Right. Well, back in the early part of this century, or the previous century – I forget we're already in 2007 - in the teen's, there were a lot of prune orchards planted here in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in Yamhill, and Polk and Washington County. And at one time Dallas was considered the prune capital of the world and there were prune orchards and they were all used for drying prunes and the prunes most of them were actually shipped to England and

Germany and other parts of Europe. And then they became a very important crop in this area for a number of years. Of course, time moved on and other areas developed prune production, for example, California increased theirs considerably, and markets changed and so today there's, well, there's only one prune grower left in the county. So that was an important part way back in the teens and before I came here. But when I was here first as an agent, it was still an important part of our horticulture production.

EU: And didn't they sell – you say there's one producer left here.

JH: There's one producer now and I understand he has a contract with someone in Japan for the dried product. It used to go to buyers and buy dried prunes in five pound packs, but you can't find that anymore.

EU: I think when we talked there were several connections with Japan and agriculture in Japan. I wonder if you wanted to talk a little bit about hay and selling that to Japan. How did that come about?

JH: Well, we have grass seed which moved into the county, in this whole Willamette Valley - it used to be primarily in Linn County but now its pretty much up through Yamhill County and Polk County.

And we have a farmer in the county who's been in the service and one of his brothers in the service was in an export business in Seattle. And he was visiting with his friend one day, and he said we've got all this straw from the grass seed fields and he had wondered if someplace in the world where we could market it. And he casually said he had just met with this client in Japan and he said he was asking about the roughage material and stuff like straw. And he said why don't you get an airplane ticket and go to Japan and talk to this guy. This farmer did and made a contact, and actually made a contract while in Japan and shipped some straw over there and that was actually the beginning of what we do today.

A lot of our grass seed straw is baled immediately after harvest and it's shipped up to the Portland area where they have what we call 'super balers' and put on ships that go to Japan for roughage for their livestock program, because Japan doesn't have much land to grow roughage crops on. And it's become a market for our grass seed and you'll see, or grass seed straw and you'll see if you drive through the Valley large storage barns that store this straw in the fall after harvest and then it's gradually shipped out to Japan over the winter. And all that started with – there are probably other stories, but at least that's one story I got directly from the farmer who did it himself to start with. So it's an interesting approach.

[0:36:55]

EU: I think another crop here was barley.

JH: At one time they grew primarily cereal grains here in the, oh, in the '20s, the 30's and into the '40s and even a little later than that we had Hannchen barley as a specialty crop for the brewery industry and contractors from Vancouver, Washington and Portland and other breweries wrote contracts. Actually in Polk County we had what we called the Hannchen barley contest judging at the fair for the best barley and quite an active promotion to have a crop that was in demand at that time. And then things changed, the brewery industry changed in many ways. They use less malt they found more in other places and became more specialized as the brewery industry changed.

EU: I think the same thing happened with hops then?

JH: Well, hops were an important crop way back in the early teens or the previous century. They were centered around Independence. Independence at one time was known as the hop country, or the hop capital of the world, and there was a large participation there. In fact, they used to have large camps in the fall. People would come from all over the Willamette Valley and then I suppose some from Eastern Oregon, and come and pick hops for three to four to five weeks it took to hand-pick the hops. And that was a big outing for them and they made extra money and that was the center of going on, and of activities for the Hop industry. Here again the Hop industry has changed, it's completely controlled by large companies from New York and it's out on a contract basis, but it also... primarily breweries are doing their own contracting. For example, in Colorado, Coors has a very famous contracting program, it's an excellent program for the special barleys that they want for their brewing process, and it's a good contract for their farmers; under their instructions and what they require. So things change.

EU: Another industry that has grown up is in, you mentioned before the grass seed industry.

JH: That certainly has made a growth in the Willamette Valley. Back in the early days, again going back to the early part of the 20s, the main grass seed production was in Linn County, and the reason, there was a soil type. It was a heavy Dayton soil, fairly wet, it would grow annual rye grass and perennial rye grasses and that was our main grass seed production. When I was a student at Oregon State for example, that was the best crop growing, over in Linn County. Then, in later years, we developed through our universities particularly lots of new varieties of turf grasses, golf courses, lawns, landscaping... and so today we have a large number of varieties of grasses and they spread up all through the Willamette Valley. The Willamette Valley is still the premier production area of the United States for grass seed. For forage and for golf courses, places like that. For example, the annual rye grass is used heavily for over-seeding of laws and golf courses in the South, in the winter. They seed in the fall and that keeps them green in the winter when the Bermuda grass dries up. And then the other type of grasses are grown for all of the landscaping that goes on today, and it is a big business in Western Oregon. A lot of this county is now devoted to grass seed production.

EU: What about more recent agricultural industries that have moved in?

JH: Well the most recent is particular, not in Polk County so much because we don't have enough water, but into Yamhill County and Marion County and Clackamas County, for example, as well as Benton and Linn to the south, there's some production but its primary nursery stock. A number of large nursery companies from California that have been crowded out in southern California or not able to expand have come into the area and developed large nurseries. For example there's one up near Dayton that's about 1000 acres of pots... potted plants. And the nursery industry has become a very big industry in the state of Oregon, all here in the Willamette Valley.

[0:42:17]

EU: Why do you think there have been so many... such a... why is there such a large variety of crops that have been planted over the years?

JH: Oh, it's our climate, our location. We have a mild winter, we have rainfall in the winter that some Oregonians don't like, but we have the type of climate. It fits the area and we do not have real hard freezes. It's just this mild Willamette pacific climate that we have here that's conducive to growing a great variety of crops. I have friends that are county agents in the Midwest and they only have 2 or 3 crops that they worry about. I tell them I used to worry about 40 or 50 crops, and they don't know what I'm talking about.

EU: Then there must also be the willingness on the part of farmers to change as needed.

JH: Very much so. No, farmer is about as... one of the greatest changers there is. When there's a new development or another crop that's going to do better, they're willing to start out and try it, and if it works for them, they do make the change. And I have a great high regard for our agricultural people, how they can do that.

EU: In addition to the... to these agricultural crops that you've dealt with, you've also had responsibilities for the livestock here in the county?

JH: Yes, we have... used to have more livestock, today we have very little. But when I was an Extension agent here at that time, there was a... for example we had a fairly large purebred sheep industry. We had the Eldon Riddle family, we had the Ronald Hogg growing Hampshire sheep and others that were major producers of purebred sheep, and that was a major part. We had a ewe sale at the county fair each year that brought buyers from California and Nevada, Utah, looking for breeding stock. And there was also a similar sale in Linn County, brought people in from other parts of the United States. But we had some of the leaders actually in the sheep industry; particular was Romney sheep and Hampshire sheep here in, right here in Polk County.

EU: Can you tell the story of how Romney sheep were first brought into this area?

JH: Well, I think it was about 1902 there was a world's fair in Saint Louis, and there was some Romney sheep brought from England, and the Riddle family in Monmouth purchased some breeding stock at that show and brought them to Polk County and established the Romney breed in America. And they became the premier breeders of Romney sheep for many years, through a couple generations. In fact, at one time we had an opportunity to visit with Eldon Riddell in New Zealand when we were there, and he was buying sheep for his breeding program here in Polk County.

EU: So he would buy the sheep in New Zealand and ship them...

JH: Breeding stock and ship over here, trying to improve his breed he had.

EU: Do they continue to raise those sheep here in the county now?

JH: Pretty much gone, because they were going to grass seed, and the crops of that type, and livestock industry has shifted to other parts of the country. And we're not as... probably let's say interested in purebred livestock as we used to be as a nation. We have more cross-bred livestock for beef production and lamb production and, than we used to have. At that time it was a specialized business.

[0:46:37]

EU: What about some of the livestock? Was there beef cattle or dairy cattle here?

JH: We have beef cattle; we also have quite a few dairies. And dairies at that time, like a dairy farm I grew up on, we had 22 cows and that was a pretty good size dairy herd back in the 20s. But they have a lot of farms that had dairy cattle here and then that gradually changed as we moved into broader agricultural production of crops. So dairy industry's completely changed. We have today 3 dairies in the county, one of them has seventeen hundred milking cows, and they milk 3 times a day; it's a milk factory. And so they have an entirely different situation today in the dairy industry but at one time that was... many farms had 12, 14, 18, 20 cows and ship milk... it was just part of their income. Agriculture has changed.

EU: I suppose... How much of this change had to do, has to do with changes in technology and... obviously you couldn't hand-milk seventeen hundred cows... [laughter]

JH: I think a lot of it is just technology and also the fact of location of factories and so forth. For example, a lot... some, this dairy, large dairy in this county, people came from California, ended up getting crowded out of crowded areas down there and the dairy industry has shifted to Idaho and Utah and other places, but technology has a lot to do with it. For example, this dairy is in the progress, in the process now of... as I understand it within this next year will put in a digester for the waste products to develop electricity and will use most of the waste product that way. And also, the fact is that with... also they're planning to bring in what we call a New Zealand milking parlor, which is like a merry-go-round and will milk 80 cows at a time. Big change in the dairy industry.

EU: Where did they the money for this? I mean, that must be expensive then to keep up with those kinds of changes.

JH: I'm sure they have to be financed heavily with their banks and lenders to do the job, but they're people that are experienced a long time in the dairy business and they grow that way.

EU: You'd mentioned before about a low income family nutrition program. Could you talk a little bit about that and about... who did you serve in that program?

JH: This program was developed with our home Extension agent, and she worked with what we called low-income people in various communities of the county. And the way we did that program, they were actually... they were people, volunteers like a 4-H leader, was selected in each of the communities, maybe 2 or 3 or 4 people, and they were brought in for training on nutrition for the family, low-income, how you could get by with less cost for developing meals, and also for family business information; bookkeeping, paying your bills and things like that. And this program was very successful because of the training that these people received. Then they went back in their own community and held meetings with their neighbors and friends and spread the, let's say "the word," and this was a program that was particularly successful in a couple communities of the county that were pretty heavily occupied by low-income people. It wasn't a large group but... and that program is still in operation today. It's a very good program which helped a lot of people through some rough spots in their life.

[0:51:15]

EU: In the program did you... were there many migrant workers in the county at that time?

JH: Not at that time. This was before most of the migrant workers like we have here today. At that time it was people who lived in communities like Falls City and Grande Ronde. Grande Ronde was an Indian Agency in the community, but there were a lot of others that were not Indians, that were also low income that seemed to congregate in those communities. But we had them here right in Dallas also, and in West Salem, part of Polk County.

EU: When you started in Polk County, you were the staff chairman?

JH: Yes.

EU: And you talked about how the different programs expanded from home ec and agriculture and included others. Is that similar today, that same organization? I mean, is there an agent here for Polk County?

JH: There is a chair – we have a staff in Polk County but we're now working with Extension staff at Oregon State University on a more of a, in this case on a tri-county basis. Marion, Polk and Yamhill County are so situated that they fit in fairly well, so, for example we have a livestock agent who works primarily with swine, sheep, beef cattle, and he's stationed in Polk County but he serves Marion and Yamhill County. Likewise in Yamhill County they have a farm forestry agent to serve these three counties. There's a number of serving, even in horticulture. We had a specialist in, primarily in Christmas trees and that type of activity and he served the three counties. So it's a different in arrangement but there's still the services available.

EU: When you look at the Extension Service, have there been... What do you think have been some of the greater changes over the years? Or that you saw during your career?

JH: I think this matter of cooperating together between counties, using more specialized agents, specialist training... you know we have people today with a masters degree in horticulture as a horticultural agent for example, serving 3 counties. That's made a major change. And then of course, society is changing. There's more... internet information, television information. And people, some get their information in different ways than you used to. So there's some changes in that direction also. There may not be much direct contact in many cases as we used to have, but Extension still plays a very important role in the education in agriculture, home economics and 4-H youth work.

EU: Talking about the history of the Extension Service, did you know Mr. Ballard?

JH: Knew Frank Ballard very well. He was the Director of Extension when I joined the Extension staff, and through most of my career... he retired before I did, but yes he was a great leader. He was a quiet individual but he had his finger on everything that happened in the state of Oregon I believe, and understood the role of Extension, and he imparted that role to all of us that were Extension employees throughout the state.

[0:55:38]

EU: And what did he... what lesson do you think, or what did he teach? What did you learn from him about...

JH: Well I think one of the main things was keeping close contact with people, directly with them. That was one of the... his role is to see that we had good contact with people and that each of us working for Extension in the same way had local contact and understood what people needed or wanted or what their desires were. And that personal contact was an important connection but that was... in his leadership role was the way we did things.

EU: So was that something that he practiced? I mean it was a very personal relation with you?

JH: I always thought so. I always felt very comfortable go in to see the boss, and if I had a question or a concern... had a very good relationship with him.

EU: Are there any stories about how he recruited agents for Oregon?

JH: I have one favorite one because his favorite... this fella's a good friend of mine and he was a county agent in North Dakota. His brother worked for the Soil Conservation Service in Oregon and knew Frank Ballard. Anyhow, in discussions somewhere along the line, Nels Anderson, he applied for a position in Oregon, and so Frank Ballard contacted him one

day by phone and said he was taking the train to Chicago to a meeting, and if he'd get on the train in the county some place don't forget the city and North Dakota, and ride the train for about an hour with him he'd interview him. And he did. And he hired him, and he became the county agent over in eastern Oregon for many years, and then later went on to do agricultural work in Africa. And then he, before he retired he came to Polk County as our livestock agent. A very close friend and we still visit together.

EU: I've heard that the Extension Service in Oregon is really a strong program compared to other areas or states in the country.

JH: I'd say they rate very high, always did. When I was working with the national association I had contact with all 50 states, and there were some excellent Extension programs but it was always nice to come home and know that I worked for the Oregon Extension Service, because of the... well I think we had a bunch of good county agents and Extension specialists and good leadership in Corvallis.

EU: So a lot of that goes back to Frank Ballard I suppose.

JH: It certainly does, yeah. He was still the key leader through the period when I was working.

EU: Okay let's take a break.

JH: Okay.

EU: This is the end of Part 2.

JH: [laughter]

[0:58:58]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is Part 3 of the interview with John Hansen. During the break, Ruth reminded us about the grape industry as being one of the newer industries here in this region.

John Hansen: Well it certainly is, this came after I was an Extension agent here, because our favorite answer about growing grapes in the Willamette Valley was, "Well if you like to fight mildew and do a lot of spraying you might grow a few," and that's kind of the way we treated the grape industry. A few years later a man came from France and as I understand went up into Yamhill County and was looking at that area and said, "Gee, this looks like home", and the next year he came back, bought some land and brought some grapes with him and today the grape industry or the wine industry has spread all over the Willamette Valley and well, a lot of Oregon but also here particular in Yamhill, Washington and Polk County, into Marion County, as well as other areas. And it's become an important part, industry for us. It's a complete change with a new variety, somebody brought in something that worked, so we are now actually nationally I understand fairly famous for their Pinot Noir grapes, wine, which is a result of that little story I just told you.

EU: Let's turn now to your involvement in some of the national and state professional organizations. Which organization were you most involved with?

JH: Well I was involved with the Oregon Extension Association... National... The Association of County Agricultural Agents from the day I started in Extension, we had at one time... we used to call it the Bull Association and that was our organization and we carried a cane to our annual conference with a stripe for each year of service we were with Extension, and if you were fortunate enough to be president, you got a gold stripe at the top of the cane. But that was kind of our fun organization here in the state of Oregon but we had our annual meetings and we were... and also we brought in some of our public people in the state as honorary members and some of them were outstanding farmers so we had a working relationship with people out in the state.

EU: For the NACAA, which was the National....

JH: National Association of County Agricultural Agents. Well in 1961, Dow Chemical Company sponsored 4 national tours, one person from each state, as an agricultural study tour. And I was selected by the Oregon agents as their

representative that year, so I joined the tour. And that year we actually toured the Midwest; we started in Fort Collins, Colorado and went clear to Arkansas and all the way back through to Boulder, Colorado, and... for 3 weeks, meeting with county agents, chamber of commerce farmers groups, and visiting farms and agricultural industry. It was a tremendous training experience, and it was sponsored by the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, and so we had contact with some of the national officers, as I got more interested... I had gone in 1954 to the national meeting in Salt Lake City and in 1958 to the national meeting in Seattle. They would meet in the western region every 4 years, so I had some contact and got interested in it.

EU: Have you gone to these meetings frequently?

JH: Very frequently. I started in 1962 going to a meeting in New Mexico and at that time I was appointed National Chairman of the professional training committee, which was one of the top committees for the national association, and so became involved that way. Your question about whether we attended frequently... just this last year my wife attended her 40th national meeting and I attended my 44th national meeting.

EU: So how... can you tell us a story about your presidency? You were the first national president of the organization from Oregon?

JH: From Oregon, that's correct. I became chairman of the national professional training committee. I met with the national board, and um... at their board meetings as well as attending the national meetings. And in Minneapolis in 1963 I was involved deeply as chairman of that committee, and the Oregon delegation came to me after the final day of the meeting and said "We want you to run for Vice President," because the next year they... officer was to be elected from the western region. And I said, you got rocks in your head. We... I've only been going to 4 or 5 meetings and I've not been a director... I gave them a number of reasons why we shouldn't, and they looked me in the eye and said, "We're gonna nominate you anyhow." And so the next year, 1964, in New Orleans, they sent the delegation, between the agents and the wives that were there, there were more than 30 people. And I was nominated for Vice President; there were 4 candidates and on the second vote, because there was no majority in the first one, I was named Vice President, which utterly amazed me. I called it Mission Impossible, but it worked. So that's how I really became deeply involved.

[1:05:56]

EU: And then you were president then in 1965?

JH: Elected in '65 in Pittsburg and... and then I served that year into '66 and was president at the national meeting, which was held in December of 1966 in Honolulu, Hawaii, which I say was one of the best meetings they ever had. It was interesting because that's a long ways to travel, and the attendance began falling off a little at the national meetings and they couldn't figure it out, what was happening. People were saving their money to go to Honolulu and we had one of the larger attendance we'd had in years.

EU: Why do you think they chose to meet in Honolulu?

JH: The Hawaiian agents instigated the invitation and it was... we met at different states that were instigated by the local state association. Actually we met here in Oregon then in 1970, in Corvallis. But that's how we became... went to Honolulu. And one of the things we picked as a theme for that meeting, East meets West, which was very appropriate. And through the help of a good friend of mine that I'd met through the National Association, Don Learch of Washington D.C., he was an agricultural consultant. He helped me set up a program, seminar, for one full afternoon on the potential of trade between Japan and America. And we actually had on our panel, representatives of our state department, and of the Japanese government. And it was probably one of the fore-runners of some of the things that lead to most of our trade with Japan today.

EU: So you were... you were president there for 2 years?

JH: Well one year actually.

EU: Oh, one year. Okay.

JH: Oh then I graduated. I got to be editor of the county agent magazine for a year. [laughter] As past president, which was interesting, we had 4 issues of the national county agent magazine and I was the editor and put the whole thing together in cooperation with the local itemizer observer paper here in Dallas, and we mailed it out 4 times; it went out 4 times during the year, 6,000 copies across the nation. Had a lot of fun doing that.

EU: Were you also active in the local Oregon association?

JH: Well after I was national president, the Oregon association actually changed to Extension association, which involved all of the Extension staff; Home economics, 4-H agents and so forth, and I was the first Oregon president of the newly formed Oregon Extension Association. I guess that's putting the cart before the horse. [laughter]

EU: So how long then were you in the Oregon Extension Association?

JH: All the time I was with Extension.

EU: And you were president then for the first year...

JH: One year. Of the newly formed Oregon Association.

EU: And you were basically instrumental in forming that.

JH: Well, partially yeah. We worked with other agents.

[1:09:31]

EU: Were there other committees or organizations that you worked with throughout your career?

JH: Well, for example... you mean locally or...?

EU: Locally, nationally, statewide...

JH: Nothing... well... nationally, I was, worked with other agents, other groups for example when I was president of the National Association. I participated in national meetings of the national farmers... Future Farmers of America for example. From the national radio... agricultural radio broadcasters association, the national grange, the national farm bureau... groups like that I attended and participated in their programs, so I had an opportunity to work with national organizations other than Extension.

EU: So looking back on your career in the Extension Service, what... what programs... and maybe we've talked about this already... What were you most proud of? What do you think were your most significant contributions?

JH: Well I imagine just working with people. I had a wonderful group to work within the county and they were very supportive and I think some of the projects we worked on like I think we mentioned the water development in the county, things of that type that actually leave something of importance to the county. It isn't something we just talked about, we actually got done. But let's see here, cooperation and working with the local people and then too, tying our contact... you know Oregon State University is a great host we have as an Extension staff and that's an important segment of our program, because of the research and things that go on at the University.

EU: So you retired from the Extension Service in 1970...

JH: '73.

EU: '73. And you've been retired and just relaxing here at home ever since.

JH: [laughter] Not quite.

EU: Not quite.

JH: The day after I retired I became Assistant Administrator of this milk stabilization division in Oregon Department of Agriculture, working with Ray Hobson. Little story behind that; when I came to Polk County, Ray Hobson was what we called our milk tester in our Dairy Herd Improvement Association Program. So, and then he later was a dairyman, a very prominent dairyman and became the director of this milk stabilization program, and so I was hired as his assistant until he found somebody, which took 2 years. So I was in that particular role.

EU: And what did you do when you talk about milk stabilization? What exactly does that involve?

JH: That was a marketing program where the milk marketing was pooled between the various creameries and the price spread out so that the farmers got an equal break no matter where they ship, say to McMinnville, or to some other creamery in the state. And we actually covered everything to, in Oregon, and a couple places in northern California and up into Walla Walla Washington, and Yakima because a lot of that milk came into the Portland Milk Shed. And it was a controlled type of program that was beneficial to the dairy industry and was financed by the dairy industry. Then Ray finally hired somebody so I was looking for a job for about 5 minutes, and I became the assistant director of the state Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and working with the soil conservation districts of Oregon and the association, which was very enjoyable work, working out over the whole state of Oregon.

EU: What kinds of programs did you... were you involved in there?

JH: The main program of course was working with the local conservation districts, but as it later developed, we moved into a program of coordinated resource management between which was... really working with ranchers and farmers and state and federal agencies in the state, wherever there seemed to be a problem. And so eventually I moved into that program and was the first director of the Oregon coordinated resource management program, and that went on for about 4 years, working out over the state of Oregon.

EU: And in that program, could you describe a little bit more what you did? If there was a problem or... what exact... how exactly did you function in that position?

JH: Well my role was... basically if there was a problem of conflict of ideas for example and some natural resources between ranchers or land owners and federal or state agencies, my job was really to try to get everybody's feet under the same table and sit down and talk about the problem. And it was quite successful. Sometimes took longer than others, but I remember one particular problem we had up in northeastern Oregon and it took a couple 3 meetings, but eventually the situation worked out and everybody was happy and solved the problem that really wasn't that big of a problem, but that's how problems are.

[1:16:03]

EU: So this was a resource management, so that dealt with water rights and use of water?

JH: Water, natural resources, forestry, timber, streamside fish and wildlife was involved, forestry, bureau of land management, state soil and water conservation districts, Oregon State Extension Service was part of this program. It was an educational program. Actually I was really performing like a county agent.

EU: I'm seeing a thread you know throughout all the work that you did was just the ability to pull people together and to solve problems and share information.

JH: That was basically my role through my lifetime of work was working with people and getting committees to work together, here's a project or we'll work out something together. But it was working with people to help themselves; I go back to my premise.

EU: And then, for 2 more years, you were involved with confined animal waste?

JH: There was a program announced by the federal government requiring an animal waste program, or project that had, in a plan that had to be developed for each state for confined animal feeding. For example, a large dairy farm or beef feeding operation, that type. And EPA, federal EPA and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality were the leaders in this, and the federal people said we need to develop a program... that we put together of, there was 5 of us, there was 3

retired Extension agents involved and our program was to go out over the state and meet with the livestock industry one year, and then the next year prepare a program, a plan for the state of Oregon that was to submit to the federal people. It was an interesting deal. Again, we really served the role, like an Extension agent, and we met with people and heard their concerns and they heard what was ahead for them, and we worked out some interesting approaches. As a result, after 2 years, the federal people held that up as one of the best programs in the nation, but we deeply involved local people. Which, incidentally, the federal government didn't want to do in the first place.

EU: Are these programs still continuing today?

JH: Pardon?

EU: Are these programs still continuing today?

JH: Yes, yes. They're changing of course, but the Oregon program is administered by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and there is a full program on controlled animal waste requirements that they must meet. For example we have a large dairy here in the county, and one of the animal wastes that they have, they use for irrigation purposes; fertilizing. They actually had to go out and buy another 300 acres of land to get enough land to handle waste that was part of that plan. So there are some requirements for the industry.

EU: Maybe we can turn now to the topic of traveling. I think that's been an important part of your career and your life.

JH: Well, it became a very important part. It started out... Marion County agent Ben Newell and myself working with our livestock associations in 2 counties, organized a study tour to, down to Douglas County, Roseburg, to see the sub clover pastures there being developed by the Extension agent, and on this trip we met a man from New Zealand who was there studying for 6 months and who was interested and grew those crops in New Zealand, was a dairyman from over there actually. And on the way home some of them said, "Well, when are you guys gonna take us to New Zealand and Australia?" Over the period of the next year or so we found that there were people definitely interested in such a program, and we'd had a pretty good era income for agriculture, so we proceeded to develop some plans with the help of a good travel agent in Portland, and in 1965 we opened it up for discussion with our people, and then developed a plan for this tour, and so in 1967, in December, we took a group to New Zealand and Australia. We thought we'd take 15 or 20 people, but we ended up with 66 people and left a group at home that didn't sign up in time; we didn't have room for them. So it was quite an interesting experience.

[1:21:45]

EU: How long was that trip then?

JH: Well, it was about 6 weeks. We visited almost a month and New Zealand... well... 3 weeks or so. And then a couple 3 weeks in Australia. And we visited farms, agricultural industry, met with farm groups and actually made a study tour for these farmers and we had farmers from different types of agriculture, and all enjoyed it very much. We met... in their process we met like our agricultural attaché with the state department and who helped us to meet some of the people. We met most of the leaders of agriculture in New Zealand. So it was a very educational tour.

EU: I'm curious why New Zealand...did New Zealand have like a similar climate or a similar agricultural background? I mean, was there this affinity with Oregon?

JH: Yeah, you hit one good remark; it has a similar climate in many ways. The 45th parallel which goes just north of Salem, Oregon, the south 45th parallel goes down through the south part of New Zealand. And so their agriculture and their crops are similar in many ways. New Zealand is a strong sheep country, Australia also but in a different way. But... and we had ties with people in the sheep industry, but there is a similarity of the area and that's what attracts people who grow the same crops, like sub clover and we were growing there and here in our county and so forth, one of the major pasture crops in New Zealand.

EU: And so after... after that tour you came directly home?

JH: Not particularly. Part of the group did, and part of the group went with Ben and Phyllis Newell, out through Perth, Australia, and up through Singapore and Hong Kong, and the other possibly third of the group, Ruth and I escorted to Fiji and Tahiti. Taking in those islands and learning more about some of the other types of agriculture in the world, and that was part of our educational program. The tour was very well received not only by the participants from our area, but also the people in New Zealand and Australia were very complimentary of the Oregon group, particularly their interest in learning and visiting the actual farms and industry in their state, and that was communicated back to Oregon State University, certainly to the benefit of Ben Newell and myself. Because I think they were wondering about us, 2 guys wandering around the world with a bunch of farmers.

EU: Who were the farmers that went on the tour? I mean, who were the people that went on the tour with you?

JH: There were local farmers in Marion, Polk County. Mostly farmers, there were other people; we had school teachers, we had... one time we had a professor of law from Willamette University go with us. The people heard about... the thing we did with these tours, we met with local people. For example, in New Zealand, Derek Glass had an international farm youth exchange through the 4-H program, from New Zealand in Polk County with a farm family. And then he went to Linn County with a farm family, so we contacted him and he arranged for every participant... we met at a barbeque at Lincoln College, and that evening every participant had a host farm family that took them out to their farm overnight until the next day at noon to see their operation and what they're doing, and had that type of arrangements in many of our tours that we actually were out on farms, we weren't just playing at tour sites in the big cities. And that was the attraction, and so we had people that would join this, our group that weren't necessarily full-time agriculture, but enjoyed that local contact. That was the key to all of our travels.

[1:26:26]

EU: So this was just the first, then, of many other tours that you and your wife led?

JH: Yes, we continued to work with Ben and Phyllis Newell in planning tours but we took each, maybe go one year and the next 2 of the other ones would take the tour. And so we ended up escorting I think around 12 to 13 agricultural study tours as well as some other group tours later on in the world. As a result we've visited between these tours and some of our own travel; we have visited over 70 countries in the world. It's been an educational experience.

EU: What were some of the other places you went on your agricultural study tours?

JH: Well one was a month in South America, we covered... pretty well covered South America and covered... actually, for example, one day we went north in Argentina to the largest agricultural area in South America and spent the whole day on a 20,000 acre ranch and it was an interesting experience to learn how they operated down there. And also been with Nels Anderson who worked in Africa, he helped, we worked together there to develop a tour there and went back to South Africa to the game farms, into Kenya and Egypt. We covered most the countries in Europe, type of agricultural business. And their main interesting trip to us was in '79, we took one of the early groups of US citizens to China for 15 days, and there again we visited farm communes, we visited hospitals, we visited schools, we visited homes, manufacturing plants. We had a tour of China in a different way than the tourist gets today.

EU: And who, who were your contacts in China?

JH: Well we of course worked with the, through our travel agent and got the visas for China, and we worked with their travel people and our escort, and the lady with her. The lady happened to be the wife of the minister of travel for China, who traveled with us for the entire 15 days we were there, observing this American group and being a part of this, although we had to communicate through our guide, we had wonderful communications and support. Real interest on the part of this lady, who I would say was a pretty important person in China at that time, so we were fortunate.

EU: Since you were one of the first groups that got into China when China opened up, what was your reception like?

JH: Marvelous reception from the people, wherever we were. Wherever we went, into a factory, they always had a luncheon, or a special party, we met the top people, the dignitaries which we called them. When we were in communities, for instance in Shang Yang in northeastern China which is in a wheat growing area, the town that we were in; when we

stopped in the middle of town, there was probably in moments it seemed like there were a thousand people around us, and they were very polite, anxious to visit and see us, see these Americans. It was a wonderful experience.

[1:30:35]

EU: Do you have stories about any of the other places you've gone to, like Kenya or Egypt?

JH: Oh, yes. I think in South Africa we enjoyed very much because of the agricultural area there, it's a very interesting agricultural area. We've had other interesting experiences in visiting the game farms in Kenya just outside of town. It's like going outside of Salem about 2 miles and standing amongst the wild animals and looking at a city; the experience of a lifetime, and we were able to do that. In all these cases we were visiting in agricultural areas. It was part of our interest even after I retired from Extension.

EU: When you were in Europe, were you... where did you go to in Europe?

JH: Well we've been in most every country in Europe... we've actually... One of the most interesting trips that we did, we joined Oregon State University alumni on a trip. We flew into Turkey and then went across the Black Sea and got on a riverboat and went up the river [laughter] The main river that goes clear up into...

JH: No the... anyhow it goes all the way up into Budapest up into...

EU: The Danube?

JH: The Danube. We visited all the countries along Danube River, and here again we visited a number of farms, and agriculture along the way, but then we picked up a car in Vienna and drove across Europe to visit some relatives that were in the service in Germany. And went up, and then back and across Europe, so we enjoyed different ways of traveling.

EU: And what was your most recent trip? You continued to travel until recently.

JH: Well our last major trip was last... in 1906, or 2006 in September. We flew to Whittier, Alaska and caught a Princess Cruise and stopped in what used to be Siberia and then in Japan, and ended up in Beijing, China. And it was interesting to re-visit Beijing, having been there in '79, the tremendous change... I describe it this way, in '79 there was about 85% bicycles for transportation. In... when we were there this last fall, it was about 85% cars and trucks and buses, and it's a completely changed, modern area compared to what we saw years ago.

EU: Were you able to go back to some of the same areas?

JH: Yes, we visited the great wall again of course, and also in Beijing we visited some spots that we had been to before, and it was very, very interesting. Tremendous changes in China.

EU: Have you... I suppose you've also traveled a lot in the United States.

JH: Well, particularly through our work with the National Association, we've been in every state in the Union, one way or another. Traveled, and we've... We have a kind of a hobby of traveling and we used to travel some with our neighbor. We have in this town of Dallas the Hunter Arboretum, named for our neighbor, who developed it. It is now the largest planting of Oregon native plants in the state of Oregon, it's identified. And we traveled to California and Arizona, and we traveled the whole East Coast one time, looking at arboretums and places to get ideas for our local here in Dallas, so we put our traveling to good use.

[1:35:01]

EU: And as a family, with your children, have you traveled throughout...

JH: With the children?

EU: Yeah.

JH: Yeah, when they were growing up we used to go fishing up to East Lake once in a while and then we ended up 3 or 4 times with another family, another county agent's family, and we'd traveled up into northern British Columbia for fishing trips, which was a highlight for the whole family, we all enjoyed that very much. That was our vacations.

EU: And the winters? In the winters do you travel...? In winters?

JH: Oh. Well yes last... this will be, the last 14 years we've gone to Cathedral City, California for January, February, March, and we rent a park model in an RV park there and we have 460 spots and we probably have more friends there than we have here in Dallas, because of our activities with them in the park during that 3 month period.

EU: And you also traveled closer to home, to the coast?

JH: We do have a house at Pacific City and travel there, not as frequently as we'd like but quite often, and spend a few days and enjoy the scene, scenery. We can see the ocean and Pacific City and the Nestucca River and interesting spots like that.

EU: What did the Extension Service think about all of this travel? Obviously when you were working they supported you in this travel.

JH: Well I think mainly because of our good experience with the New Zealand Australia first trip, they were very supportive of the travel. And of course when I became a national officer of our National Association, I had frequent trips across the United States for board meetings and other activities, or meetings in state associations and they actually were very supportive and actually provided for a period of time that year extra help in the county to take up some of the load when I was out traveling, cause I was gone about 100 days out of the year.

EU: Okay, this is the end of Part 3.

JH: [laughter]

[1:37:30]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is Part 4 of the oral history with John Hansen.

John, you mentioned a little bit about the arboretum here in Dallas, and this brings us to the last topic I want to talk about is your community service here in Polk County. Could you talk a little bit about your work with the arboretum?

John Hansen: Well, the arboretum is started by our neighbor, who was chairman of the park board for the city for many, many years. And there was 4 acres of land undeveloped in the city park. He persuaded the city to develop as an arboretum. And his dream and what his idea was, an arboretum of Oregon native plants. So, 25 years ago he started working on that, and of course being my next-door neighbor, I was drafted, and my wife was drafted, whenever we could help out. After we later retired, we spent every Tuesday morning working as volunteers. But we had developed and now have 8 acres of land into an arboretum, and it's the largest planting of Oregon native plants, identified, each plant identified for a person going by to see them, in the state of Oregon. And we're growing, we're going to have more plants in the arboretum, and so that's been one of our projects we've worked on. I've been chairman of the finance committee for many years, was president for 6 years. Interesting story of our finance committee; we met with a group of business people in Dallas, and determined out of that meeting, couple of meetings we had that we should develop a permanent trust fund, which would be invested and only the earnings be used by the arboretum for their development. We started out with a goal of 50,000 dollars, and then we looked at each other and said, "That's a heck of a lot of money to raise in the city of Dallas." That was back in 1992. And today we have right at 200,000 dollars in the bank account, raising interest and slowly able to, as we make new developments, using memberships, gifts and earnings from this fund, we're able to move ahead like we've recently added to our storage shed, doing a number of different improvements, because of that financial program. And I've been the chairman and leader of that through all of this. Had a great group, couple ex-bankers working with me and we're doing fine.

[1:40:25]

EU: Could you talk about your involvement with the 4-H Foundation?

JH: Well I worked with foundation, started actually quite a few years ago. You may have the story on our 4-H center...

EU: Could you talk about that?

JH: Well back then, as an agent, we had Extension radio program each noon at our local station. One day I was interviewing the... our recreation specialist from the Extension staff at Oregon State, and this person was on a state committee looking for a 4-H center. So I interviewed this individual, about the program, what they were looking for and so forth. And after the program we went and had lunch and when I got back to the office, my secretary informed me that I had a number of phone calls, which was usual. But one in particular she said Ivan Stewart from Salem wants to talk to you just as soon as possible. So I called Ivan, knew him real well, and said, "Ivan, I hear you want to talk to me, what's up?" He said, "I heard your radio program today. Do you ever think of my place as a 4-H center?" Now his place, at that time, was 750 acres, mostly timberland, within 8 miles of the state capital of Oregon, Salem, right here in Polk County. And so we visited about it and I said, I think it's a great idea. And so I finally suggested, I said, "I'd be glad to take you to Oregon State and talk to the appropriate people." And he said, "Who would that be?" My comment was Burton Hutton, state 4-H club leader. We were in the same fraternity in college, I'll call him. So I immediately called Burton that afternoon and told him what was up, and that's how the 4-H center landed in Polk County. They had searched the state of Oregon, and of course there were many places, but way out a ways and here we are right in the middle of the population of western Oregon, in Polk County and the land now has been... They sold some of it for timber off the land and they now have a center of 350 acres which is being, is very successful, and we have been very supportive in participating in that from the beginning. But I'm very proud of the fact that I was involved in the very beginning of it. With a simple radio program.

EU: And again it points out all the close ties that people have. You talked to one person, the talked to somebody else...

JH: That's right. It works that way.

EU: So, what did you do at the 4-H center? What are some of the programs there? Who uses it?

JH: It's used primarily for 4-H members during the summer primarily. It's used by county groups, for example Polk County has a Polk County 4-H camp, just for Polk County 4-Hers. And a number of counties are using it for that purpose. Also, it's used for many other activities. They have facilities to handle business conferences, weddings, family gatherings and so forth, and so they are booked pretty solid throughout the year, and really have become self-sustaining as a result of this, but it is still number one for 4-H activities and programs in the state of Oregon, and it's open to every county that wants to participate, or group on a scheduled basis.

EU: And I understand, you and your wife have been honored by the organization?

JH: Yes, we have provided endowment funds for the support, actually the maintenance toward... earnings get used for the maintenance, towards the maintenance of the center, and we also use a gift annuity program with the foundation, which the end result, whatever is left over will go to the same program. And a couple of years ago they developed 5 new cottages, resident cottages for people to come to participate, and they named one the Hansen cottage, in our honor for which we appreciate very much.

[1:45:20]

EU: Have you ever stayed there?

JH: No we haven't. [laughter] We've been in it a number of times but we haven't actually stayed in it, but it's a good facility and they have, actually have 7 of these now that they use for groups, smaller groups, or leadership. For example, they have a big camp and some of the leaders stay in these particular facilities. They're fully equipped, 2 bathrooms, a living room... nice units to stay in.

EU: When you've worked with the foundation, who were some of the other people you've worked with on the foundation?

JH: Oh, we've worked of course with Alberta Johnston , we've worked with... we're actually working very closely with the new president of the foundation, Norbert Hartmann, he's a... farm, has a place here in Polk County, been active in 4-H programs, and he's the new president of this Oregon Foundation. Then of course we've worked with staff on the development of our plans. We also are part of a program where part of our estate is set up to go to the foundation upon our passing.

EU: What are some of your other activities in the community then?

JH: Well, let's see. I have... oh go way back to '64 I was named Dallas first citizen, which was, at that time was, I was elected for vice president of the National Association and probably helped a little on that one. But I've been involved with our retirement village; we have a village of full retirement facilities here in Dallas, and I've been on the board of the foundation for 6 year and I was three years as chairman of the board, and then our Polk County fair foundation was formed about 4 years ago and I'm a member of a 5 member board and I'm a member of that foundation board. Our role is to try to raise some money to help develop the fairgrounds and keep the fair going in good shape, with reductions in public money for such activities. That's becoming more important. And we're in very active in our Presbyterian church over our lifetime. We've both been Presbyterian members, been involved in most every office there is. So we keep pretty active. Then I've been in Kiwanis. I was a Kiwanis member for 52 years so far. And ACTION, which is a service club that we've been very active in.

EU: Do you see other retired Extension service people very often?

JH: Well not as often as we would like, but once a year we have a reunion as a group. In fact we just, this year we were down in Gold Beach. A number... couples there was about 25 or so of us and we have a reunion. And then of course, I see, here in Polk County we have four, three retired agents and I see them from time to time, close friends. In fact, Roger Fletcher who's retired from Extension was a 4-H leader one time is secretary of our fair foundation board, so we're doing things together yet.

EU: So is there any... any other activities. This is so much, it's overwhelming. [laughter] Anything else that we should have talked about?

JH: No, not much. We keep busy, been busy. Was always interested in helping people. I learned that as an Extension agent, as an educator. I learned to help people help themselves and I say, you know that works. It still works. Some of the things we're doing we're... it isn't what we do necessarily; it's what we get some other people to do.

EU: Okay well, thank you very much.

JH: [laughter]

[1:50:21]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is Part 5. During the break, John you were telling some more stories. Could you tell me the story you just said about your next-door neighbor and how that came about?

John Hansen: Well, our next-door neighbor showed up one day when they were looking at the house, and we live on a creek and so they were asking questions about flooding, what problems there were if any and so forth. After a little conversation, the lady turned to me and said, "My father said you would help me." And I looked at her and said, "Who's your father?" She said, "Bing Frances." Bing Frances was my 4-H agent when I was a 4-H member in Washington County, and I'd been... we'd been friends all of his life, and he had moved to Capital Manor in Salem, and here was his daughter. She now is our next-door neighbor, so there's a connection over the years.

EU: And you, then you started telling another story...

JH: Oh, another travel story?

EU: Another travel story, yes.

JH: We were escorting a group through Alaska, and we were put with another tour group, which is a combination with Princess Cruises or something like that, and there was a lady from Australia, who was alone... she was with another group but I mean traveling with no other companions, and the fact that some of our group had been to Australia, we just adopted her and she joined our group, and we sat together and got acquainted on the tour. When we finished, we said that if you ever come back to Oregon, we'd like to see you. So we kept in contact at Christmas, and 4 years later she came back to Portland and said, I'm going to be in Portland, Oregon. And so we arranged to meet her and bring her from the airport, to our home, and visit, and the first evening there she said that... 2 weeks ago she said I was in Europe on a... group of us Australians on a tour, and we met a group from Pendleton, Oregon, and they kind of adopted me like you did. And she said I want to call there later tonight. She brought out the picture of the group and I said there's a familiar face there. She said, that's the lady I want to call, Mrs. Temple. I said, her name is Celeste Temple. Her mouth fell open; she looked at me and said how did you know that? I said she was my 7th and 8th grade teacher. And so we got on the phone that night and I said, I'll get on the other phone, and I said, at the end of your conversation ask her about teaching grade school at Union School in Beaverton, Oregon. And of course then she did, and there was a dead silence, and I got on and I said, Celeste, this is one of your pupils, and we had a visit. 4 years later, this gal comes back and we then get her, bring her from the airport to our home. She says, I have a surprise for you. I said, what's that? She said well I was talking to Celeste last night. They're coming down to Dallas on Thursday, Celeste Temple, and her daughter and daughter-in-law drove from their wheat ranch in Pendleton, Oregon, had lunch in our home, and I had a reunion of my 7th and 8th grade teacher. [laughter]

EU: It's amazing.

JH: You never know.

EU: You never know, it's just amazing the ties you made on your trips. I think that really summarizes too, what working for the Extension service, is just these strong ties.

JH: Anyhow, that's my story.

EU: Okay. Any more?

JH: [laughter] Absolutely.

EU: Thank you.

[1:54:34]