



The OSU Extension Service Centennial Oral History Collection, October 13, 2007

Title

Alberta Johnston

Date

October 13, 2007

Location

Johnston residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

Summary

Johnston describes her youth in Hickman, Nebraska, her time as a Camp Fire Girl, and her college years at the University of Nebraska. She continues with a mention of her time teaching home economics and science. From there, she discusses her first position in the Extension Service in Wyoming and the later positions that she held, as both a county agent and as a specialist. She talks about a short stint with Extension in Montana before describing her first position with Oregon Extension. She continues by recounting some of the projects and programs she was involved in, especially study groups and Mini Colleges. From there, Johnston reviews her time as a supervisor, assistant director, associate director, and finally deputy director. She rounds out the interview by sharing memories of her volunteer work with Extension after retiring and the changes that she has seen in the program.

Interviewee

Alberta Johnston

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 with Alberta Johnston for the Extension Service at Oregon State University. Today is October 13, 2007, and we're at Alberta's apartment in Corvallis.

Alberta, to start with, could you tell me where you were born and where you grew up?

Alberta Johnston: I was born near Hickman, Nebraska. And I went to school in Hickman from my first grade to graduation.

EU: Graduation of high school?

AJ: Yes. In one building. It was a small town, small school.

EU: What part of Nebraska was that?

AJ: About 20 miles outside of Lincoln, Nebraska.

EU: What did your parents do?

AJ: My father was a farmer and my mother was a homemaker. Although my mother died when I was two so I do not remember her. I grew up with my father and an aunt and an uncle.

EU: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

AJ: I had two sisters. One was 12 years older than I was, and the other was two years older than I was. My older sister was nurse, and my other sister was a teacher. We went to school together, we went through college together.

EU: When you were a child, were you involved with 4-H activities?

AJ: No. I was a Campfire Girl. 4-H was not something that we had in the community where I grew up, and it was kind of interesting because Nebraska does have a strong 4-H program, but we didn't have it in Hickman.

EU: So the school you went to was very small, you said?

AJ: Yes, there were about 15 people in my graduating class. So I knew everybody. It was a small town.

EU: So, did you live out on the farm?

AJ: No, after my mother died we lived in town. And my father continued to work on the farm.

EU: When you were growing up, did you always know that you would go to college?

AJ: Oh yes, that was one thing my father insisted that Dorothy and I both go to college. Alice wanted to be a nurse and he certainly gave us a lot of help in getting through school. He was very interested in us having an education.

EU: So all three of you children....did he or your mother have advanced education?

AJ: No. I don't know why my father was so intent on us getting an education. At one point he said to me, "You know, I'm not going to leave you a lot of money, but I'm going to give you a good education and so you can take care of yourself." And I think that was good idea.

EU: So you and your sister, you went to the University of Nebraska?

AJ: Yes, we both went to the University of Nebraska. She went to Wesleyan University and when I graduated she moved over to the University of Nebraska and so we went to school together. And she then at that point then went into Home Economics and so we were both in the School of Home Economics.

EU: How did you choose Home Ec rather than nursing or teaching or...

AJ: You know, I really don't know. It was something I just thought would be fun to do and I liked a lot of things about homemaking and that kind of thing and I thought it would be a good experience for me. And I think it was the right choice. There were parts of Home Economics I didn't like, particularly the sewing part; I didn't like sewing and clothing construction, but I liked the science and I liked the foods and the economics; the kinds of things that families have to make decisions about. Because that was the area that I became interested in as I went through my career and went on for my Master's.

EU: So when you were studying at the university you had a wide curriculum.

AJ: Yes, I did. I was going to be a teacher in Home Economics and I started out as a Home Ec teacher in Nebraska. I taught for four years before I went into Extension.

EU: Where did you teach?

AJ: I taught in Lewiston, Nebraska; I taught in Lewisville, Nebraska, and I taught in Beatrice, Nebraska. I didn't stay in one school very long. When I taught in Beatrice, I was teaching seventh and eighth graders and I did not like that. So that's when I decided I wasn't going to be a teacher any longer.

EU: So, what did you teach in Home Ec, then?

AJ: I taught the whole curriculum. I was the only teacher in Home Ec.

EU: Okay, so you taught sewing and cooking...

AJ: Yes, I did the whole thing. But in the other schools, I taught in high school and I did teach some science classes in high school as well as Home Economics in high school. I taught Chemistry and Physics.

EU: But you said you knew then you didn't want to continue teaching?

AJ: And it's very interesting because now I like working with that age group. But I did not like working with the age group when I was teaching. I really didn't. It wasn't a good year for me.

[0:06:25]

EU: So how did you get involved with the Extension Service?

AJ: I was married and moved to Wyoming and that's when I got my first job in Extension. Where I was living they were looking for a home economist in Extension so I decided I would apply, so I did and started working in Extension then.

EU: Where was that?

AJ: It was in Thermopolis, Wyoming. And I was there several years. I was divorced then I moved to Buffalo and then I moved into Laramie and started working on the state staff and that was within about seven years.

EU: So your first positions in Thermopolis and Buffalo, was that as a home ec county agent?

AJ: Home Ec and 4-H.

EU: Both?

AJ: In Wyoming they had two agents – one was Agriculture and one was Home Ec and we both did 4-H.

EU: How long were you in those positions?

AJ: I worked in county positions six years; then went back to...then I got my Master's and then I went to Laramie as a specialist.

EU: Where did you get your Master's degree?

AJ: Kansas State in Manhattan.

EU: Why did you go there and what did you study there?

AJ: I went there because the person who was the head of Extension in Home Economics was a good friend of mine. She had been my boss, so to speak, when I was in Wyoming, and I decided I would like to go to school and study under her, which I did. Some of my classes were with her. And my field then became Economics and Family Economics and Consumer Education, those kinds of things. So I got a degree ... my Master's was in both Economics and Home Economics.

And I had a really interesting experience when I was in school because I lived in the home management house and I was the person who taught the kids... I don't know if you know what a home management house is?

EU: No, I've never heard of that.

AJ: Well, we had about eight students at a time in the home management house and they took care of the house and they did the cooking and cleaning and all the kinds of things that homemakers have to do those eight girls did. And I helped them get through their six weeks in the home management house. And then a new group would come in and I would do the same thing over again. It was really a good experience and financially it was a good idea too because I had my room and board and I had a nice apartment to live in and I got to know a lot of the kids in college who were seniors in college and so it was a good experience. Some of the things that happened in home management house were funny.

I remember going into the kitchen one day and the person was trying to mash sweet potatoes and they were using a whisk and they did it too fast and I got it right in my face. And the girl was sure I was going to fail her in the home management house. You know it was a good experience. That's when I played a lot of bridge, which I'm still doing. Some of the girls wanted to learn to play bridge, so I taught them how to play bridge in the evening.

[0:10:40]

EU: When did you get your degree there?

AJ: In the '60s.

EU: When I think of the '60s, I think of the women's movement and the Civil Rights movements and Vietnam.

AJ: Did I grow up through that? Yes, I did.

EU: Did that impact, I mean living with the women in the house...

AJ: Well, I've always felt that women are equal to men. And I don't think I was ever in a position where people did not respect me as a woman. But I certainly was wanting to make sure that women were being treated equally. It was important to me, but I never had that feeling that I wasn't. I don't know why. Maybe because a lot of my nurturing was with my father, and I think that may have made a difference.

EU: When I interviewed Jane Schroeder or Roberta Anderson, all from small rural towns in Nebraska or Kansas. Roberta was from Washington outside of Walla Walla, but all of you put yourselves through college. Education was important for the family and so is there something coming out of rural America? I don't know?

AJ: Sure, I think small towns had the culture of wanting their children to be educated. At least they did in the town that I lived in. It was an important value of most of the people in the community. Not everybody went to college, but they did

other kinds of things. But as I said it was just a part of me that I knew I was going to college. Nobody ever told me that I wasn't going to college.

EU: Or that you couldn't.

AJ: But my family did help me through college. I did some work but I didn't have to work to go to college.

EU: What was it like living in Wyoming, for example, in the 50s – 60s? Did you enjoy it?

AJ: Oh yes, Wyoming was a great place to learn Extension. It really was. The staff was small; we were very much a family, and we had good leadership in the people that were working on the state level and as I said, one of the reasons I went to college was because May Baird who worked in Wyoming, went to Kansas and she was working with some of the programs there and when I wanted to go to school she suggested coming to Kansas and she helped me get a job when I went there. It was a very small community, and we did a lot of things together as a group. It was just like having another family.

EU: What kinds of programs did you have there in Wyoming?

AJ: In Wyoming I did food preparation, I did clothing construction, as I said, wasn't my favorite part, and I organized 4-H groups, I worked with study groups, the home ec study groups. One of the things that I learned to do there was to work with the public in trying to plan what was important to them – what were their needs in the area that I could help them with. And I thoroughly enjoyed working through the process of how do you decide what to teach your study groups, for example?

[0:15:30]

EU: How did that process work, then?

AJ: We would get a group of homemakers together. And when I was in Wyoming the first time I had a group of women to plan programs, I invited them into my home and we had lunch and we sat down and talked and then we just had a really good time. They responded well to the idea of trying to think about things that were going to be important to them now and also in the future. And that's when a lot of them talked about their need for education in the use of money. You know, how do you use credit, how do you budget, what about investments, insurance, all of those areas I worked in were things that they were really interested in. I didn't do as much clothing construction in those days – other agents did! When I did a lot of my training in clothing construction, I would have the specialist come in and do it for me.

EU: This consumer education was that for personal or was it because they were ranch wives or farmers?

AJ: They were concerned with making the best use of what they had. Sometimes they didn't have a lot of money but they also had other kinds of resources. When I was working in Buffalo, I said I always thought the people that lived on farms and ranches there didn't think I was making enough money to feed myself. When I would go out to their homes to do a lesson they would send food home with me. Steaks and eggs and butter and all those good things that they were raising. And you get very close to people when you work in Home Economics in Extension in a small community. You are just a very important part of the community.

EU: And so then you were the liaison then with the state Extension and specialists come down then from...?

AJ: Well, you planned your program after you did in the county all the home agents got together and we worked with the specialists to see what the specialists could help us do and what we had to do for ourselves. And that was true when I came to Oregon.

EU: So that must have been good training for the rest of your career?

AJ: Oh yes, I really learned a lot about Extension and because the staff was small, I understood what the ag agents were doing as well as what Home Economics was doing because I worked very closely with the ag agent and we did programs together. In one of the counties for two years we had a large desk with a person on either side. The county agent sat on

one side and I sat on the other. That was not the most comfortable ...because sometimes you didn't really didn't want the county agent to hear what you were talking to women about. But anyway, it was a very closeknit group, it really was and the same thing was true...I only worked a couple years in Montana.

EU: Where did you work in Montana?

AJ: I worked out of Bozeman. There I worked primarily in home management and one of the agents in farm management and I used to do meetings for families – husband and wife. We would talk about farm management and home management and how they meshed and how they worked together. And that was the area that I was really interested in.

EU: So it seems that became your specialty, then?

AJ: Yes.

[0:19:45]

EU: But at the same then you were going to graduate school ...

AJ: It was after my graduate school that I worked on the state level. In Wyoming I did very much the same thing that I did in Montana. I worked in farm and home management. And it was interesting to work with couples rather than just the homemaker trying to see how the income from the farm was managed for the family. And it was, as I said, a good experience.

EU: Was that a common program? I mean where the husband and wife ... you would put together the home and farm management?

AJ: No, that was something that we tried during that period of time in all of the states they did that kind of programming at least a lot of states, because when we did national training we would work in farm and home management together.

EU: How did you come to Oregon, then? How did you get the job here at Corvallis?

AJ: Well, when I was working in Montana, I went to a regional meeting and met some of the staff from Oregon and when we were leaving the meeting two or three of them came up to me and said, "Alberta, why don't you apply for a job in Oregon? We'd like to have you here." And so I called Esther Taskerud who was the program leader for Home Economics here and she asked me if I would send her a resume, which I did. I went to a national meeting in Washington D.C. and she was there and she interviewed me while we were there and after we talked, she said "I think you need to have breakfast with the Director of Extension, too, while we're here. So we had breakfast and he talked to me and when we left, he said...

EU: That was Mr. Ballard, then?

AJ: No, that was Gene Lear and he said, "Do you want to move to Oregon?" And I said, "Yes, I think I would like to move to Oregon." He said, "Okay, you have a job."

EU: Just like that.

AJ: And I never came to Corvallis and the day I came to Corvallis, Esther met me in Portland to bring me down here and I was driving in, and I thought, "What am I doing with myself knowing nobody in Corvallis?" I had not met the staff; I didn't know anyone and I came from a place where I knew everyone. But it worked okay. It was a good experience. Esther was a great mentor for me. She was the kind of person that I wanted to be. She was a real caring person.

EU: After I interviewed Roberta [Anderson], she mailed me a list of "Taskerisms" or something? Funny sayings she would twist words, or something.

AJ: She had that ability to make people work together and that was true was in Home Economics. The team of people who were working in Home Economics worked together. We did a lot of planning together, we did training together, and we did a lot of things together.

EU: It seems there was a strong ethic of being a mentor. I mean women helped you in your position. Did that continue on when you were here in Corvallis and you were able to help other women?

AJ: Oh sure. And you know interestingly enough, a lot of men said I was their mentor when I was here in Corvallis. I was the person they looked to when I was in administration. They came to me with their questions and concerns. And just the other day, Hank Wadsworth, who was the Director of Extension here for a period of time and he was the person who hired me when I started in administration and I was saying to him, that you know, you really were a mentor to me and he said, "Alberta, you were my mentor." He said, "You were my rock when I was here." But I think it's the way listen to people and how you respond to people is important because that was one of the things I think I do well, listen to people's concern and try to help them.

[0:25:20]

EU: It just seems to be one of the strengths of the Extension Service – the strong ties between colleagues and friendships.

AJ: And when you know somebody in Extension, they are your friend for life.

EU: What position were you hired for in Oregon? What did you do?

AJ: I was a specialist in Home Economics and again I taught home management. Here we did not work in farm and home management. I worked entirely with homemakers' groups.

EU: You weren't at the county level? You were here?

AJ: Yes, I came to Corvallis and I was on the state staff when I came here. I was a specialist and my title was Specialist in Home Economics, in Home Management.

EU: So you were a liaison then with the county agents? Throughout the state?

AJ: Yes, all over the state. I worked with Jane. And when you talked to her ...

EU: Jane Schroeder?

AJ: Yes. No, I worked with all the staff in Home Economics but I did things other than Home Economics I think. I became very interested in the consumer movement when I was here. And I was interested in how families got information about consumer decisions and that kind of thing.

And I worked with a group and we organized what was called the "Oregon Consumer League." It became an advocate group for consumers in Oregon, and it became part of the national consumer movement.

EU: When you say, "we", who did you, work with organizing the Oregon Consumers' League?

AJ: I worked with teachers, I worked with attorney, I worked with people in the insurance field; there were all the kinds of fields that families had to make decisions about became a part of the Consumer League.

EU: Did you organize periodical meetings then? I mean bring the people together?

AJ: Yes, we met and we had special meetings when we would invite the public in to hear things. We brought in national speakers occasionally in the area of consumer education. I was one of the charter members of that organization and it's still going but not as strong as when I was...I don't think people have that same intense interest as they did then in the consumer field. But part of my feeling about that came from my Master's program and my major professor because he was very interested in consumer problems and he worked on the national level. So I got interested in doing those kinds of things and he encouraged me to start a Consumer League in Oregon.

EU: Did you work with the state Legislature?

AJ: Some of the consumer field did work with the state Legislature. There are certain things as an Extension person that you don't do – you don't work with the Legislature unless they ask you and the people in the League where the kinds of people who wanted to work with the Legislature. I helped them get prepared for the legislative groups but I didn't necessarily work with the Legislature.

[0:29:35]

And the other thing that I did, I've talked a little bit about study groups...

EU: Could you talk about that a little bit more?

AJ: Sure. Extension homemakers were organized here in Oregon into what they called "Extension homemaker groups. And in each county they had a county committee who worked with the area planning programs for their study groups or Extension study groups. It was a very strong organization here in Oregon. There were probably 12,000 homemakers organized into study groups in Oregon at one point and their job was to help the Extension staff on the state level and on the county level decide what kind of programs should we be developing to help them. They had a very strong organization on the state level and Esther [Taskerud], after I had been here several years asked me to work with them on the state level and again, this was one thing I enjoyed doing, was working with volunteers and it's been one of my joys being in Extension, being able to work with volunteers.

And they had a national organization of Extension homemakers, and I as I went through my time here in Oregon I helped the group with the planning for their national meeting that they held in Oregon. Somebody asked me what that was like and I said, "Trying to keep 1400 women happy was really a chore." But I had good committees, I had a lot of people helping me, and we had a very successful meeting in Oregon. We made enough money that they are still using some of the money that we made with their little organization that they have now.

We don't have that relationship with study groups and Extension homemakers groups like we did when I was there. We felt responsible for making sure they got the right information about things they needed and we worked very closely with them and we worked closely with the faculty at Oregon State to make sure we were getting the right information. They helped us with writing bulletins and writing out materials and in preparing our lessons for homemakers. But they don't do that anymore.

EU: Because you were working mainly with the agents, or did you actually work with the study groups? The volunteer women themselves?

AJ: Sometimes we did; sometimes we would go out and train the women, train the people who were going to do the teaching in the study groups. What we did was we planned a lesson, we trained an agent to teach it to the homemakers or sometimes we went into the county and talked to the homemakers, to their study group leaders and they went back to their study groups and taught it so, everything we did could reach a lot of people - more than you could do it if you were just doing it on your own. Because we taught people to do it. The same thing is true in 4-H. We help the leaders and they work with the kids.

EU: You say that's changed though now; the relationship with the working of the study groups is different?

AJ: We don't have study groups any longer.

EU: Ohhhh.

AJ: Well, some counties have a small number of study groups, but they do their own programming; they don't work with Extension Home Economics agents to do programming in the counties very often. Once in awhile they may teach a class for a study group, but not very often anymore.

EU: When did that change and why do you think it changed?

AJ: I think it changed while I was working in administration. I think it changed because home economists, well, the Dean of Home Economics felt that some of the things we were teaching might not be as academic as they should be.

Because some of their needs were, you know, some of the needs were simply learning how to do things – cooking, food preparation. Some people need that kind of experience and they felt they felt this wasn't something that faculty should be involved in. And as the specialists became faculty members, the way we worked with people, changed. And I don't know how else to explain it.

I think it was a change in how we were organizing Extension because when I came here we worked with the School of Home Economics but we were not faculty members, we were not part of the School of Home Economics, we were part of the Extension staff and there's a difference in being a faculty member in the School of Home Economics and being in on the Extension staff.

EU: And what was that difference then? More academic emphasis?

AJ: When we became faculty members it became important for us to become more academic. We were faculty members and we had to go through the process of promotion and tenure and all of the things that go with faculty and you work differently when you try to do that.

[0:36:40]

EU: So then, did the county agents have to take over more of the duties that the specialists had done?

AJ: They had to do things by themselves and as the study groups sort of when away...you know to keep an organization going you have to have somebody helping that process. They can't do it by themselves....you have to have somebody...and as Extension withdrew from that organizational part, study groups sort of went away. A lot of them. We don't have many study groups and they are very independent, they do their own thing and they don't have to worry about whether...the thing that bothers me sometimes is I wonder whether the information they are providing to their members is really correct. But it that was the way we were organized and the women in our groups were very political. When budgets became a problem, they went to the legislature and talked to the legislature about how Extension helped them as a family. Just like 4-H groups can do now.

EU: Okay, let's take a break. This is the end of Part 1.

[0:38:20]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is Part 2 of the interview with Alberta Johnston. Alberta, could you talk a little bit now about the Mini Colleges. How did that come about?

Alberta Johnston: It came about because the Oregon Extension Homemakers Council thought it would be a good idea if we could have what we called a "Mini College" where anybody could come in and learn about homemaking and all the areas of homemaking. And we could do some more in-depth study in a certain area if they were interested in it. And the group decided they would like to try a Mini College. Again, Esther Taskerud gave me the assignment of working with the committee on trying to plan this Mini College. And we talked about it and as we talked about the kind of classes we were going to have. We had classes and as it related to family relations, we had classes in money management, we had classes in the clothing field, in nutrition. Then we also did classes that were also fun. We did some kind of craft things that the women could take. We did that late in the afternoon after we had done all the other heavy things during the day.

The committee said, "You know, if we can get 150 homemakers to sign up, we'll be really happy." So we sent out our information about the Mini College, and we did a sort of brochure that we sent out talking about all the classes and how it was going to operate. And as the registrations came in, I realized it was going to be a lot more than 150. The first year we had 400 people. We had some couples come in as a couple because the men wanted to take some of the classes. We even had a couple of single men come in who were homemakers with their families came in and the rest of them were all, of course, women.

But it was so much fun. One day I was travelling some place here in Oregon and this lady came up to me and said, "Alberta!" And I said, "I don't know who you are." And she said, "I was in the first Mini College and I remember you." But, you know, the women responded to that kind of thing. It gave them an experience on campus and they felt that they were going to college. And I did it for about three years - that was when I was moving into supervision in Administration

and so they hired somebody who wasn't a part of the Extension staff to do the Mini College. It didn't work as well and about two years later they decided it was not going to work. It was a fun experience. The Master Gardeners used the Mini College and they sort of patterned it after our Mini College. It was a good experience for women who have never been to college to come and live on campus and go to classes and understand what their kids were going through when they went to school.

[0:42:10]

EU: How long were the classes or the college? Was it a one-week program?

AJ: It was a one week. They came in on Sunday and they left on Friday afternoon.

EU: So you had one week of the year.

AJ: It was in the spring when there were no students on campus. It was in the spring between spring term and summer term and we lived in one of the dorms.

EU: What years was this?

AJ: I can't remember.

EU: In the '60s or '70s?

AJ: It was in the '60s, maybe in the '70s. I don't know. And our classes were usually an hour in length. Although we did some classes that would be a half-day because of the kind of thing we were trying to teach and people could sign up for what they wanted to sign up for. And all of the home ec staff, including agents, would help in teaching. They enjoyed coming to Mini College and teaching as a part of the role. And all the specialists taught a class. We got people from outside. In my field, I could get a banker, or I could get an attorney or something like that to teach a class. People were really interested in it. Nobody ever asked for pay – the teachers – they all did it because they wanted to help homemakers and so it was an interesting experience. But I'm sorry it didn't....well, when the state council was not longer important, there wouldn't be anyone to give it the boost it needed to continue.

EU: Did Len Calvert work with you?

AJ: He always helped me on the materials that I sent out to homemakers and he would write it for me. And he would help me get the materials and then we would have someone put it in print and we would print it. He was really helpful and he taught classes in Mini College every year. Because some of them wanted to learn to write, and he could help them in that. He was always part of Mini College. People expected him to be there.

When you talk about Len Calvert, when I was a specialist, I worked very closely with some of the people in Communications. They would help me with my writing. And I think they helped me all through my career because they were the kind of people...I could write something and they would take a look at it and edit it and make it more meaningful. I'm using it now in my volunteer job.

EU: That's right; he's on the Board of the 4-H Foundation?

AJ: Yes, and I still take him things to edit for me. When I'm doing the newsletter or if I'm doing a letter asking people for money, or appeal letters, my annual report. I'm just now sending him something I wanted him to edit. He does such a good job and he's a good member of our board because he understands 4-H and the role that 4-H plays for kids.

[0:46:10]

EU: What were some of the other programs you were involved with when you were a specialist? Is there anything else?

AJ: Well, there was one other program, and I was involved in the organization of the Northwest Adult Education Association. Did I talk to you about that?

EU: No.

AJ: That was when I was concerned with how did all the groups that were trying to do adult education work together, and we organized an adult education group and people were members from Washington, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, British Columbia and Extension people were a part of it. The community college people were a part of it. How can all of us work together to make sure the educational programs that are being done for people in our communities were the right ones to do and to do a good job. And to learn to do things together. Because I think sometimes we were doing the same thing and we could do it better together. I helped organize that organization.

EU: Did you have periodic conference or meetings?

AJ: Yes, we had a conference every year and I started that as a specialist but I continued to work with that organization when I went into administration and supervision. Because it become even more important to me then because the coordination ... and the idea being an organization that was interested in adult education and so I was very involved in that. I served as their secretary for a long time, I was their president and you do all those things when you get involved in organizations.

EU: That was a northwest organization and you said British Columbia was part of it. Were there many other ties with Canada and did Canada have a similar Extension Service?

AJ: They had what they called an Extension Service, but it wasn't with the university, it was with the Department of Agriculture. And, one summer, I went to Alberta, Canada to the province and taught a group of Extension homemaker groups in Alberta trying to talk about what we did here and how they could work there. But it was different because they were not a part of the university system. But as a result of that experience when I did some advance work in adult education, I went to the University of British Columbia to do my work. I met a lot of the people on the faculty at the University of British Columbia who were in adult education and I enjoyed having them be my teachers.

EU: Were you involved with national organizations? National professional organizations?

AJ: I was involved with the National Adult Education Association and the National Consumer League, the consumer movement – I was involved in several organizations. The adult education, I was the person from Oregon who served on the board for the national organization. And we did a national meeting in Portland. I just love doing national meetings in Portland [laughter]. Yes, it was fun doing that. You know, people would come to Oregon because a lot of them didn't ever have a reason for coming and there were a lot of people who came that didn't go to the meetings that were closer to them, they would come to Oregon because it was different. That was a time when I learned to work with the community people, people in the military and it was a good experience. Then again, that is an organization that is no longer around, but I think it had a purpose then. And I think it's good that when it no longer has that purpose that they should just do away with it. Some organizations continue even if they don't have a purpose.

[0:51:55]

EU: So, when and why, how did you decide to move into administration? How did that happen?

AJ: Well, one of the home ec agents became a county staff chair. And she was talking to me about the need for more leadership from women in the Extension organization itself. And one of the supervisors in Extension retired, and I decided that I thought I knew enough about Extension and how to be a supervisor so I applied for a job as a supervisor. And I was hired as a supervisor, and I supervised nine counties for a period of several years. And they were all the metro area – Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Columbia, Marion, Polk, Yamhill and that was the area that I supervised. And I was officed in Portland for a period of three years when I was supervising those.

And this was a new role for a woman because in the past, usually the counties had two supervisors – a man and woman. The man was responsible for the organization, the budgets, the personnel and that kind of thing in counties and the women were responsible for the home ec program supervision. When I became a supervisor I did all of it. I did the budgets, I worked with the counties in program planning for all of Extension. And I was the first person in Oregon that had that kind of responsibility. And I think it helped because I think people finally realized that women could do those kinds of things - they could do the budgeting for the county, they could do the public relations for a county, and they could give leadership

to all the programs in the county. They didn't have to just do home economics. And I think that's when....now we have a lot of staff chairs that are women. It's not unusual.

Lois Watkinson was the first woman who became a staff chair and she was the staff chair in Polk County. And she was really a good role model for any woman who wanted to do into that kind of program. And there were a lot of people who followed her in that kind of a role. And I think it helped Extension to reach out women in supervision and administration role.

[0:55:30]

But my first job was as a supervisor. The counties that I worked with...the county chair in those counties had been county chairs for years. They knew how they were going to do their job, and it helped me because I learned how people did that kind of a role, and it was a good experience for me.

EU: As the first women in that type of position, I mean was there any resistance from these men?

AJ: I thought there might be.

EU: That was in the '70s?

AJ: Yes. I remember the first time I brought all the staff chairs in my region, in my group, together. And the Director of Extension said to me, "Would you like to have me to go with you for your first meeting with your staff chairs?" And I said, "No." And he said, "You know, I'll be glad to do that for you if you want me to." And I said, "No, if I can't do this, then I don't think I should have the job." So I had my first meeting and when I got back to the office, the director came in to talk to me. And he said, "Well, I hear it went okay." And I said, "You what?" And he said, "I got phone calls from the staff chairs telling me that you were okay." [laughter]. It was okay to have a woman in that role and so I didn't have...you know there were one or two staff chairs that weren't sure women should have that kind of a job, but most of them, if you do your job well, and you work with them and you listen to what they are doing and support them in what they are doing, they would accept you in that kind of a role. And those staff chairs are still good friends of mine. Many of them are really good friends of mine. But that was my first role as a supervisor.

EU: How did you like living in Portland, then?

AJ: It was fun. I lived about two blocks from the Civic Auditorium. And close enough to downtown that all of my home ec friends when they came to Portland stayed at my apartment; they didn't have to stay in a hotel [laughter]. Sometimes I felt like I was in the motel business, because they would come in and they would leave and somebody else came, but it kept me in touch with what was happening in home ec as well as what I was doing in my job. And working with a small group of counties and many of them with some of the same problems, it was good to do. They were all larger counties, urban counties, most of them.

And after I had been living in Portland for about three years, the director asked me if I would like to come back to Corvallis and live and continue as a supervisor. And I said, "Sure." Because I spent a lot of time on the road between Portland and Corvallis meeting with the rest of the supervisors and administration and so it was nice to come back. And after I had been back for a year or so, was when I really went into administration rather than supervision.

EU: What was your next position, then?

AJ: I was an assistant director.

EU: Okay. Was that still with the counties?

AJ: I worked primarily with the counties. And my work as Assistant Director was I worked with the supervisors who were working out in the counties; although I still had a couple counties I was supervising, I always did that, but mostly I worked through the other supervisors.

EU: What kinds of things did you help them with?

AJ: Well, the budgeting, the program development kind of things, hiring personnel. And as a group with the other supervisors and myself we did a lot of work with the whole area of promotion and tenure. How did you work with agents in getting promoted and tenure. And what does it mean. It was at this time more and more people were becoming part of the faculty.

When I was promoted, I was promoted as an Extension...my professorship was in Extension. It wasn't in Home Economics. And when you have to get a professorship for promotion or tenure in Home Economics, it's different because you have other faculty members and how does Extension compare to what other faculty members are doing. And that was something that was going on all over the United States at that time. A lot of states were interested in the whole area of promotion and tenure. There were a number of national committees who were working on that. I worked with one national committee for a period of time. We wrote a paper about what does promotion and tenure mean in Extension and how do you evaluate it in comparison to people who are working here on campus.

[1:02:10]

EU: Was there resistance to that? When the supervisors then had to then apply for tenure. Did a lot of them go back to school, then?

AJ: Some of them did, although at that time most of the people we hired had their Master's. And now, of course, most of the people who work on the state level have doctorates. I never got my doctorate. I worked on my doctorate, but I never finished my degree. When I was at the University of British Columbia I did most of my course work for m doctorate, but I knew I didn't want to go through the process of writing a dissertation.

But it was more difficult when you were working with promotion and tenure. If you were working with director of Extension in trying to get promotion and tenure or if you were working with the dean of a college. We went through that process when I was working there. And they are still going through the process. Because some people on the faculty are not sure that some of the things that Extension people are academic enough. And it also meant the Extension people had to think about what were the things they could do to be promoted and how could they do their job as a teacher and that kind of thing. You still hear those comments around. Did we hire somebody who doesn't want to be promoted, or go through that process, to do a job in a county or do we have everybody go through it? Not everybody that works for Extension goes through promotion and tenure now because lots of them are program assistants and that kind of thing – not on tenure track.

EU: So, I suppose a good part of your job – we talked before about being a mentor. That I mean just supporting and helping people through the process with their careers.

AJ: Oh yes. It took a lot of time. Every year we would divide up the group of the people who were going through promotion or tenure or both, and we worked with them on an individual basis as they prepared their paperwork to become tenured or to get promoted. And what were the things they were doing that we could put into the paperwork that would help them become promoted.

It was different for the people on the state staff and those in the counties; it was somewhat different. And but even now, they have a good process now I think that they are using, but it took a lot of time to get to that point. But, I think it was important to our staff because it gave them recognition beyond what they were doing in the counties if they became a professor or associate professor. I think some of the people who they worked with in the counties didn't understand why that was important, but I think it was important for the person themselves.

My promotion when I became promoted to full professor, I was working in Home Economics and my program leader helped me do the writing. In fact, she did a lot of the writing on my promotion materials, and she was so happy when I got promoted. I think she thought, "I finally got somebody promoted." [laughter]

[1:05:55]

EU: So you were Assistant Director, and then you soon became Associate Director?

AJ: Yes. They reorganized the administrative staff; that was part of it, and we had three associate directors and a director. And the associate directors did not only...part of their job was supervision of counties and there were two people, or three people, who were interested in the county part of the program. And the director did the work primarily with the deans and department heads and that kind of thing.

EU: So you were part of this three-member team then? There were three associate directors?

AJ: And you are going to be interviewing one of them – Harold Kerr and Tom Zinn – the three of us worked together for several years as associate directors. And so we had an administrative team, and there were four of us. The director was the other person.

EU: Now at that point, what were your duties? You weren't specifically supervising Home Ec, or were you?

AJ: No, I was supervising county operations.

EU: Was it statewide or where you divided into districts?

AJ: We were divided into districts and at some point during my career; I supervised every county in the state. We would change districts and I supervised southern Oregon; at some point I supervised eastern Oregon and so on. I can say I supervised every county.

EU: Did that involve a lot of travelling?

AJ: Yes.

EU: Did you enjoy that part of it?

AJ: Yes. And I enjoyed learning about the state and the counties and how they operate. Counties operated differently. And they had different problems. It was at that time we were having some real serious problems as it related to county budgets and we went through a process of helping a number of counties get their own county Extension district so they had a basis for the county budget.

EU: Is that when there was a whole election process? I think Len Calvert talked about that.

AJ: Yes. It was a very complex kind of thing. I worked with Curry County – I'll just pick out one of the counties I worked with – to get a district. Walt Schroeder was staff chair there at the time, and they had an advisory committee in the counties, and they made a decision that they felt that they should have a district there because the counties were not sure sometimes that they had enough money to support Extension. And Extension is supported by three different levels of government – federal, state and county. And if you don't have county support it's difficult for the other two.

And so we did a lot of – Len worked with me on that county and Dick Craig – we had lots of meetings talking to people about what a district was, how could they organize, and how could they get out the vote to make sure they had a district. And we had to develop a budget for the county, and so it was a process. One of the things we had to do was to make sure that every city or town in the county approved the idea of having a county district for Extension and so -- some of it was very easy. Curry County we had no problem, all the towns agreed and the county government agreed that they wanted a district and so that wasn't a big part. It was getting out the vote to make sure we had enough people to vote that we could have a district.

Len was very helpful in that because he helped write stories, he helped them do things to make sure people understood what the district was and if they really wanted Extension, this is what they needed to do to have Extension in the counties and the district is still working and, as I said, it was a process and there were a number of counties that went through the process. And whoever was supervising really got involved in helping particularly as they worked with the county commissioners and that kind of thing to make sure that they understood what we were trying to do and if they really and truly felt Extension was important to the counties they would give us support.

The other day, I was reading the newsletter and they are talking about trying to do some more Extension districts now because of the budget concerns.

EU: Did you work with Multnomah County?

AJ: Yes, but when I was working with Multnomah County we didn't have budget problems [laughter]. The person who was staff chair in Multnomah County had been in the county for a long time, had good relationships with the county commissioners and every time they had a new commissioner, we was a very good staff chair in that he knew one of his big roles was keeping contact with the commissioners and county government, and we never had a problem with them saying they didn't want to fund Extension in Multnomah County.

The county that I worked with that did say that was Marion County but we did that in a different way. We didn't ever get a district in Marion County. The county commissioners wanted to do it with taxes...they wanted the people to vote for an increase in taxes and they put together a group of services that they wanted to give under that taxing process and one of them was 4-H and Extension. They got a lot of help from Extension people and the 4-H people, and they didn't have any trouble getting their tax package passed and so they felt they could use Extension in that way, helping to get people to vote for the county levy. It worked. And I don't know, I have no idea what's happening in Marion County now.

[1:14:55]

EU: So then, your career in Administration – then you were the Deputy Director?

AJ: Yes, for the last two years?

EU: So then you served right under the director, right?

AJ: I served under the director and I still worked with the other associate directors but I didn't do supervision of counties. At that point I became more involved in working with department heads as it related to their personnel, and as it related to the money that Extension provided for their departments.

EU: So you worked more closely with the University rather than the agents and supervisors in the counties?

AJ: Yes. But I still worked a lot with personnel in the counties. One of the interesting things that happened when I was working in administration and supervision was that we were trying to figure out the best way to interview people who came in for positions. And we felt it was important to them to visit the counties where they were going to work and we would get three people and we would have to go three times to the counties with three different people. And so we decided we were going to give a try and we brought the three people in together and took them to the counties. [laughter] I remember the first time – I went to Eugene to pick up three people; they were going to Curry County to be interviewed for a position there for 4-H. And I had three people in my car who didn't know each other, who all wanted the same job [laughter] and we got in the car and I was driving and I was concentrating on my driving, and after we were on the road for a few minutes. I said, "This is an awkward position for everybody, including me, because I don't know how this is going to work, but why don't we talk about it - let's get acquainted with each other." And we did, and before we got to Gold Beach, they were friends. I didn't have to talk; they were doing all the talking for me. And it became the way we interviewed people and we still do it. They will bring in all the people who are going to be...not every time, but many times...they will bring in the people who are going to be interviewed and they go out together and they travel together. People told me it wouldn't work.

[1:18:11]

EU: It sounds strange, but as you are saying...

AJ: It did work. But it was interesting when we left Curry County two of them came up to me and said, "Hire the other fellow." And I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "He's better than we are for this county." I thought that was interesting. But having people come in together to apply...you give them some time by themselves; they are not together all the time, but it really did work. And if they didn't get one job sometimes they would come back and try for another one.

So that was one of the experiments that I worked on that I think has been useful in personnel. Personnel was a part of the job that I really liked. Not only the recruitment and hiring but getting the people to be oriented to what they were going to be doing in that position. Because if you hire a good person, but don't help them learn their job, it's not a very good situation, you don't have the kind of employee that you really want.

EU: Why don't we take another break. This is the end of Part 2.

[1:19:50]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This Part 3 of the oral history interview with Alberta Johnston. Alberta, could you talk a little bit about the changes in the programs in the Extension Service. You had the three traditional branches ...

Alberta Johnston: Yes, when Extension began there were really three areas – Agriculture, 4-H and Home Economics. Community Development was a part of that initial programming. But as people in the state asked for help in other areas, I think programs have changed in Oregon. We now have what we call Forestry, or natural resources, program area; we have Sea Grant, working with the people on the Coast; and then for a period of time we had Energy as a part of it. We used to think of Extension has being sort of four program areas. At one point, we had seven program areas here in Oregon. And they really came about because our advisory committees, not only in the counties, but our State Advisory Committee said, "We need help in these areas." And so in order to do that kind of thing we had to increase the number of program areas we were focusing on in Extension.

EU: In talking about natural resources – Forestry was an important part?

AJ: Well, forestry is an important part of Oregon's economy and the whole area. You know, agriculture and forestry sort of are concerned with natural resources. But forestry has a different base than agriculture and so we have a very strong forestry program in Oregon. There are a lot of forested areas in Oregon. Both of them are concerned with the use of natural resources.

EU: When they added these programs, in the '80s and '90s, how did that impact your work in Administration as a Deputy Director?

AJ: You worked with additional program leaders [laughter]. When I was Deputy Director I hired the person who is program leader for Sea Grant, and I hired the person who was a program leader for Home Economics. The person who was in Forestry, I didn't get involved with that because that was done primarily with the Director. I think the Director decided what areas I was going to work with and what areas he needed to work with. It worked very well with any director that I worked with. It was just a really good experience to work with the kind of people you had as directors and associate directors.

EU: One of the other areas of change since the '80s and '90s and so forth, has to do with the computer and electronic technology. Could you talk a little bit about that and how the use of computers impacted your work?

AJ: Well, I think in personnel as we hired people, we tried to hire people who had computer expertise, but one of the things that we did during that period of time was we appointed a committee of some people from the computer field and from program areas and myself and we thought, would it be possible to do an electronic *Journal of Extension*? We thought it was a good idea and the director gave us permission to do some experimenting with it and we did a sample of what we would consider an electronic journal – we chose some articles from other journals and put them on electronically.

EU: Did you have a paper journal at this point?

AJ: Yes. And there weren't a lot of people that subscribed to the paper journal, and it wasn't doing very well and we thought if we could do it electronically, more people could use the information. And so after we got the sample of a journal together, the Director let us go and visit some regional meetings of directors and they gave us time and we showed them what could be accomplished with an electronic journal and at this point, our work has worked. It has really worked. A lot of people do use the electronic journal now. We don't have a paper journal for Extension. And it also gives people...we can get more information out through the electronic journal than we could through the paper journal.

[1:25:20]

EU: So, it wasn't just an electronic copy of the journal, it was all different...

AJ: Yes, and our first editor for the journal was Len Calvert. He went through several years as the national editor for the journal and so he chose the articles and got them into electronic media and so Oregon did get some leadership there as well as in the idea of using electronic journal rather than a print journal.

EU: So this journal wasn't the Oregon journal?

AJ: No, it was the national journal.

EU: So Oregon was in the forefront of one more thing.

AJ: Oh yes. And I don't know how many people really realize that we did that kind of thing. It was a very small committee that worked and we just decided that we would try it and so we chose some articles and did a sample...what we would say was a sample journal. And we showed it to directors and other people in leadership roles, to people at the national level. And they saw the need for it. Somebody at the national level had to make it happen nationally, but we gave them the idea that it really could work.

EU: I think one thread that goes through the Extension Service, too, is this involvement at the national level on conferences and the professional organizations.

AJ: Yes, all of the agents belong; if they are 4-H agents, they belong to the National 4-H Agents Association as well as the Oregon one. And Oregon gives a lot of leadership on the national level. We had several of our agents who are presidents of the Agricultural Agents Association, and we have had one who has been the president of the 4-H Agents Association, so we give a lot of leadership to national. And Epsilon Sigma Phi which is a fraternity of Extension people. Right now, one of our retired people is the national president of Epsilon Sigma Phi, Duane Johnson. And so we have given leadership in all the fields in Extension.

EU: Is it true – I have it in my notes here – that you were honored as a volunteer by the fraternity?

AJ: Yes. Every year Epsilon Sigma Phi - they honor about four volunteers in Extension and they had never honored a person who had been in Extension as an agent and then became a volunteer and I wasn't sure that they would ever do that. But they did honor me as one of the volunteers a couple of years ago. And 4-H inducted me into the National 4-H Hall of Fame about the same time. It was kind of interesting that somebody who had been on the staff and then became a volunteer gets that kind of honor.

Volunteering is fun.

[1:30:10]

EU: Before we move into your second career as a volunteer, could you talk a little bit about diversity and the need for diversity on the Extension Service staff?

AJ: When I first started in supervision and in administration, one of our goals was to try to have a more diverse staff because the population of Oregon was changing. We had more Blacks, more Spanish Americans or Latinos, and one of our deliberate goals was to try to get some Black agents and also Latino agents as a part of our staff. And at one point we had three agents in Portland who were Blacks and we also had a Latino who was a 4-H agent in Yamhill County. And it helped our staff to understand the differences in culture; to understand there is differences, but also to accept the differences and cultures. We were involved in a review of our activities in this whole area. The national Extension sent out somebody to do a review of diversity in Oregon and we gave training to agents in how do you work with different cultures.

EU: Was the Extension Service active with Native Americans?

AJ: Yes, we have a Native American program in Warm Springs and have had it for a number of years. We usually try to have somebody who is in Agriculture, Home Economics, and 4-H. I think now it's just 4-H and Agriculture. But we have been working with the Native Americans for a long time.

EU: So, you retired, then in 1990, is that right?

AJ: That's right. I can't believe it's that long ago. 17 years ago.

EU: But you didn't leave the Extension Service? You continued your involvement then with the 4-H Foundation.

AJ: The first year after I retired, I helped the homemakers do their national meeting in Portland. I did their arrangements for the meeting and made sure that the program was carried out the way the national association wanted the program done. And when I finished that job, I was talking to the Director, Ernie Smith, and he said, "I would really like some help with the 4-H Foundation. We have a grant to train volunteers in fund development, and we also had agreed to do a regional meeting for 4-H trustees – foundation trustees." And he said, "Would you be willing to do that?" And I said, "Sure."

And so my first assignment with the Foundation was to do the regional meeting for 4-H Trustees. I worked with the National 4-H Council on the program part of the program but I made arrangements for the meeting in Portland and we had it at one of the hotels. And one of our trustees has a home up in the hills in west Portland – a beautiful place – and she agreed that we could come to her house one evening for a reception and to have a social time. It was a gorgeous evening and everybody was so impressed with this and when they left they kept saying, "Will Patty come to every one of our regional meetings and entertain us?" She did a great job and it was so much fun to meet all the trustees from the western states.

People from other parts of the United States heard that we were having a training in Oregon and I found that there were about four states that weren't in the western region that wanted to come, too. So we had a nice group of people and we had a three-day conference and our evening at Patty Palmer's was something that everybody thoroughly enjoyed. She had hired someone to play the piano and a violin and she had great wine and cheese and that kind of stuff. Everybody thoroughly enjoyed the evening and the home was just beautiful. So it was kind of fun to do.

[1:35:05]

It was my first experience with trustees of foundations and I found them to be the kind of people that I would really like to work with and so I never quit. I just continued to work with the foundation. But I continue to be a volunteer. I have not been employed by the foundation.

EU: What's the mission of the foundation?

AJ: Our mission is to try to raise fund private funds to help 4-H expand their program activities and their programs and we do it in a number of ways. We provide money for counties to do innovative ways of doing 4-H programming. We have money that provides funds for groups of families to do leadership development for young people. And we also have a program that provides money for clubs to do community service kinds of activities. Those are three things that we started.

We also have the 4-H Center and during this period of time we have done a lot of work at the 4-H Center. We have improved it a lot.

EU: Where is that Center?

AJ: It's right outside of Salem – about ten miles up in the hills, in the Eola Hills. It's about 325 acres and when the foundation was first organized in 1957 and in the '60s they bought the property for the Center. We built some new cottages for people to stay in when they were at the center for meetings. We built five new cottages, and we built a new building for office and places where they could have meetings for educational purposes. We have worked with the 4-H staff in that one person from the 4-H staff works with natural resources is housed at the center. She has her office at the center so she does a lot of training in the area of natural resources at the center for 4-H for staff people.

EU: So 4-H members or organizations from around the state can have their retreats or training sessions there?

AJ: Yes, we have training sessions for 4-H; some counties have their 4-H camps at the Center in the summertime. I'm really pleased when I first started working out there we had two, three, county groups that met at the Center. Right now we are going to increase the number of counties that are going to use the Center for their camping experience. We got a really major gift that we endowed to give scholarships to the kids that go to camp at the Center. And so, more and more counties are now saying they would like to go to the center because they can get scholarships for kids to attend camp that can't afford to come to camp.

And we are just now getting our first group of counties that are asking to come to the Center for their camping experience. The Center is also used by school districts for outdoor schools. We have 14 weeks of outdoor schools at the Center in the late winter and spring when 4-Hers are not necessarily using the Center and so it's available for any youth organization to use. We have a lot of youth organizations that come for meeting and use the Center. And adult groups also use the center occasionally. A number of state government groups' staffs will come out on a retreat and stay at the Center and so it's not just for youth, it's for anyone who wants to use the Center.

[1:40:10]

I certainly didn't expect when I took this job that I would do the kinds of things that I have to do – being involved in fundraising and doing a newsletter for people to keep them up to date with 4-H and writing an annual report for an organization – those are things that I didn't expect to do, but I've found that I enjoy them because I can really tell the story of 4-H while I'm doing it and to encourage people to be involved in 4-H.

The number of kids that are involved in 4-H has continued to increase in Oregon and that's not true in the United States. We've had a substantial increase in the number of kids using 4-H. And we try to make sure people continue to hear about 4-H. We have a booth at the State Fair every year where our trustees spend time and talk about 4-H. We have a very strong group of people who are trustees for the foundation. Not necessarily with a 4-H background; people who are in business; people who have heard about 4-H but have not been involved but want to give help. So we have very diverse kind of foundation and I would have to say the only reason I'm still doing this is because the people I work with are the kinds of people that I want to continue to work with.

EU: And your position is, Executive Director, is that right?

AJ: Yes, I'm the Executive Director and I have an office in Ballard Hall right down from where I used to work, but I do try to keep myself separate from Extension [laughter]. I don't try to get involved in Extension decisions. I think this is kind of hard, but it's possible to do. You're concerned about 4-H Foundation and it's not a part ... it's a private group, non-profit organization and...

EU: And it allows you to keep working with people like Len Calvert? He's on the board, is that right?

AJ: Yes, and Ernie Smith, who was the Director who got me this position, is on the board and an agent from Central Oregon is on the board. There are three people from Extension on the board but we have bankers, we have accountants, we have people who are retired from business, we have several people in the real estate business. So we have a very diverse group. And we just celebrated our 50th anniversary as a foundation and the other day I was trying to decide how I was going to tell the people who read my newsletter about our celebration. And I looked at all the pictures that people took during the celebration so I'm going to do a collage of pictures for my report of the celebration rather than a lot of words.

[1:43:55]

EU: How big is your endowment now?

AJ: We have over four million dollars in endowments. We have endowments for administration to run the organization, we have program endowments and that includes scholarship endowments, and then we have a lot of money in county endowments. About half of it is for counties and they have endowments – we manage their money and they use it has they desire in their counties. And I think that's been useful. At one point, I think some of the agents couldn't understand why we needed the foundation. They thought they could do it in the counties, and they thought we would take money away from some things they were trying to do in their counties. But the endowments have really been useful and in addition to

that when we do our fundraising many of the people will say that this is a gift for a certain county and we then give it to that county to spend.

We've grown as a foundation. Our 2007 total revenue was 2.5 million dollars which is probably one of the larger foundations in the Oregon... in the United States. And it's been interesting to help an organization grow and to become really self-sufficient as an organization. Most of the work that is done is done by the volunteers. I simply give them help; I don't try to do their work for them. And I think they enjoy that.

We are, as I said, a non-profit organization but we worked with an attorney to help us set up the supporting organization to operate the Center because it's a business and it takes a lot of time and so we have a board of six people who are in charge of the operation of the Center. Only two of them are foundation board members, the rest of them are people who are interested in the Center. So, now I'm working with two foundations or two non-profit organizations rather than one. But I think it's been a useful change.

EU: And you have plans for the future, to continue? Are you doing some planning in that area?

AJ: Oh, yes. About six years ago we did a long range planning process and made the decision, what was our real mission right then. And our mission then was to try to get funds and to get partnerships with other groups. And we partnered with the OSU Foundation a lot in the last few years. They provide us with a part-time fund development person and that has been so useful because that person's job is to go out and try to raise money for the foundation. And there are a lot of people who will serve on the foundation board but don't like to go ask for money and they don't have to if we have somebody to do it for them. And the OSU Foundation has been very useful to us and they also invest our endowment money and some of those kinds of things. It's a good relationship. A couple of years ago we decided that we needed to write down what our relationship was and so we now have agreement with the foundation – what they will do and what they expect from us. So it's been an interesting 17 years. I think to myself that there are a lot of people that don't work at a job 17 years when they are paid! [laughter]. But I would suggest that people think about volunteering when they retire because you get a lot of satisfaction out of what you can do as a volunteer.

[1:48:55]

EU: So, looking back on your years with the Extension Service, just sort of a summary, what are some of the major changes that you have seen?

AJ: Well, I suppose one of the changes that have been made and we have talked about it during our conversation, was the idea of the Extension people being part of the University system, I mean being faculty members in the University. And what affect that has on program and also on the budgeting process. The fact that now a lot of the budgets are for departments in the University system – we used to have an Extension budget and the administration were responsible for the total budget. Now the decisions are made by department heads or deans and that kind of thing. I think that's a very different concept than when we were doing our own. The personnel things – the hiring – is done in a different way. I think the departments are more involved in deciding what positions they need to carry out their programs and so the administration has changed a lot in the years that I worked in Extension.

EU: What do you think is the future of the Extension Service?

AJ: I think it's the kinds of things that Extension can do for people in Oregon is one that will continue to be a need. Extension is the part of the University system that reaches out to people in the communities in the state and tries to give them help in their problems and in the things that they are concerned with. And I think that we continue to need that kind of an organization. It may change as we continue; we already know it is, because our Director now has the title of Vice Provost for Engagement and Extension and so it is changing. But I think the things are happening are drawing Extension and the University closer together which is important. Because that's the reason for Extension is to take the University out to people in the communities.

EU: When you look at your career, the salaried career and as a volunteer, what are the things that have given you the most satisfaction? What are you the proudest of; what is your legacy?

AJ: I suppose the thing that I would say I am proudest of is working through people and not trying to do things by yourself. You know, because you can't do all the things you need to do, but if you understand how to work with other people, you can accomplish so much more and no matter who the person is you learn something from them and how you work – it's a continual learning experience. Even as a volunteer you work with different kinds of people and you learn that. I think I was a good mentor for a number of people in the organization. I think that a lot of women in the organization saw me as a person who was leading them into some different roles in Extension.

EU: And the personal satisfaction? It's been a wonderful career for you.

AJ: Every time I think about it, I think everything that happened to me just seemed to happen in the right way because I've had a really great experience in my career. I've had a lot of satisfaction in what I've done. I've thoroughly enjoyed my career in Extension. I've enjoyed the people I've met, the people who have worked with me and all the people out in the state during my experience in Extension – it's just been a great experience for me.

EU: Are there other things that we didn't talk about that you would like to talk about?

AJ: No, I think not. I think I've talked long enough!

EU: Okay. Thank you very much.

[1:55:25]