



## The OSU Extension Service Centennial Oral History Collection, October 28, 2007

### **Title**

Walt and Sally Schroeder

### **Date**

October 28, 2007

### **Location**

Schroeder residence, Gold Beach, Oregon.

### **Summary**

Walt Schroeder recounts his childhood in New Jersey, including his years as a Boy Scout. He goes on to describe attending Rutgers University for two years, then moving out to Oregon to finish his undergraduate degree at Oregon State College. He discusses his first job out of college, with the Commodity Credit Corporation, and then his first Extension Service position as a 4-H agent in Coos County. He speaks of serving in the military during the Korean War, returning to Extension work in Coos County, and then going to Wisconsin for his master's degree. He then recalls a few other agent positions that he held before becoming the Chairman of the Curry County Extension Office. Schroeder continues with descriptions of several programs he worked on, including support for horticulture and adult education. He describes the changes that he has seen over his career in Extension, and he details a number of his post-retirement activities, including a stint in the Oregon Legislature, becoming an author, and an array of volunteer work. The interview finishes with Schroeder's wife, Sally, providing a short history of her life and activities.

### **Interviewees**

Walt Schroeder, Sally Schroeder

### **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 Walt Schroeder. Today is October 28, 2007 and we're at his home outside of Gold Beach, Oregon.

Walt, to get started, do you want to tell us where you were born and where you grew up?

**Walt Schroeder:** Well, I was born in a little town, at that time, called Hackensack, New Jersey which was the county seat of Bergen County. We lived at that time in a community nearby that did not have a hospital, called Lyndhurst. And at a young age we moved to another little town close to Hackensack called Maywood, or in the Dutch term, Maïen Valdt which was a little Dutch settlement pretty much and quite a few Germans and others there. I went to school in Maywood; we did not have a high school in that town of Maywood, so all our tenth grade kids after we graduated from ninth grade went over to Bogota High School and they had about the same size population as we had and so we made a full high school -120 in my graduating class. It was a great school, we had a good time together and of course there was a little community rivalry, but not that much. Bogota kids and Maywood kids got along fine. So, I was raised there and spent 8 years in Boy Scouts, hiking, doing all kinds of things that a boy likes to do.

**EU:** Were you involved in 4-H has a child?

**WS:** No, I was not. I had a victory garden and that got me interested in 4-H, but I didn't know of any 4-H clubs or anything like that around there. I was involved in the Boy Scouts at the time too and I decided to stay in Boy Scouts and became an Eagle Scout with two palms so I didn't really have time to go into 4-H at that time. But I did know about the Extension office because I did get some bulletins from them, so I said, "Hey, this is a great outfit, I would sure like to be involved in Extension when I graduate from college." And I assumed I might graduate from college, but my folks couldn't afford to send me so I had to get a scholarship and work my way through college. I had some very interesting jobs and some interesting experiences getting through college.

**EU:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**WS:** I have one sister; she's three years younger than I am and she and her husband live in Corvallis and we get to see them occasionally when we travel through, but that's all just the two of us.

**EU:** What did your parents do?

**WS:** My Dad owned a couple of service stations; one was in partnership with another gentleman, but he had two service stations. I used to work there in the summers for him as well as working on – our little community of Maywood had some farms in it, so I worked on the farms there, mostly at one farm called Lydecker's farm, putting up hay and weeding sugar beets and all that kind of stuff for the livestock. I had a great, wonderful time there. I got my interest in agriculture from the gardening and also from working on that farm.

**EU:** When I think of New Jersey, I think of cities and towns.

**WS:** Oh yes, and it is that way now. There was a little community right next to us called Paramus, it was all farms and now it's all city. It's a bedroom for New York City. And the same is true of Maywood. The population of Maywood is probably more than six or seven times what it was when we lived there. It's not a nice place to be. It's a nice place to visit, but not a nice place to live...as far as I'm concerned.

**EU:** Isn't New Jersey the garden state? So it does have an agricultural base?

**WS:** It was an agricultural base and then between my senior and freshman year in college I worked at a dairy and poultry farm Hunterdon County, which was really an agricultural area in western New Jersey. It was during the war and they were looking for Victory Farm volunteers. So, in addition to my volunteer Victory Garden, I also worked as a volunteer farm worker helping to milking the cows, cleaning out the ..., haying, all kinds of projects there. I just fell in love with agriculture even further at that time. I really enjoyed doing that.

**EU:** So you said growing up, you knew that you would be going to college, or your parents expected you to?

**WS:** Well, I wasn't sure. My Dad had to quit school when he was in the sixth grade and he was determined that his kids were going to go to college. We were not wealthy by any means, in fact, of the lower-middle income family, but Dad insisted that I was going to go to college. So we met with the resident director of instruction and I got a scholarship for 40 dollars for a semester and tuition was 80 dollars a semester at that time. So that helped and I worked in the director's office mailing out Victory Garden bulletins. I had a room at a place we called "The Towers" which was upstairs "penthouse" of a factory building. Another fellow and I had the job of stoking the fires at night. So every night, about 11:00 o'clock we would stoke the fires so they would be ready to go the next day again. Then, I washed chemical equipment for the Chemistry Department, including Dr. Selman Waxman who developed streptomycin. We washed equipment for him. I worked for the Horticulture Experiment Station for two years and again got my interest in agriculture really pushed up. I worked with some real famous individuals who had developed peach varieties, pear varieties, and apples and so on, so I had a chance to really see what was behind it all. My job was spraying, harvesting, and just doing all kinds of things on the Horticulture Experiment Station and I loved that job. It was really nice.

[0:05:45]

**EU:** Where did you go to college?

**WS:** I went to Rutgers University, which is the state university of New Jersey for two years.

**EU:** What years was that?

**WS:** I started in June of 1945. As soon as I graduated from high school, I got into college immediately and took two courses that summer. At that time all the GIs were coming back too, so the colleges were just straining for places for people to live and study and stuff. But I got along fine with the GIs. We had a great time together; I learned a lot from the GIs. They were all pretty mature, even though they weren't that much older than I was. So I served on different committees with them and worked on different activities and belonged to clubs with them and we had a great time.

**EU:** So from the beginning, what was your major?

**WS:** My major at Rutgers was general agriculture because I wasn't sure what area I wanted to go into. I was interested in poultry but also in livestock and crops and I just wanted to test them all, so I took all those things. And then my folks moved out here in 1946. My Dad did a lot of travelling and he had been in 48 of the 48 states and he liked Oregon the best of any of them and so they bought an apartment house in Corvallis because that was where the university was and they wanted me to do to college and we couldn't afford for me to go, so I finished up my second year with Rutgers and finished up the summer working at the Experiment Station and then came out here in early '47.

**EU:** I was curious how you ended up coming all the way across the country to Oregon.

**WS:** Well, my Dad just liked it out here. New Jersey was really too crowded and it was just too hectic back there and it wasn't really a place, he didn't feel, to raise kids, even though we were both teenagers and stuff. He didn't feel that was a great place to raise kids and so he wanted to get to a place that was more friendly toward doing that kind of thing.

And so we lived in Corvallis and I went to OSU and I was delighted with OSU--OSC at that time-- and lived at home and had jobs. For two summers I worked, I think I mentioned yesterday, at what is now the Finley Wildlife Preserve. There was a 4,000 acre beef and seed ranch. I didn't work with the cattle much but I did work on the seed harvesting vetch, rye grass and that kind of stuff, operating equipment, tractors, and combines and in one case I had to operate a combine by myself with a heavy crop of oats and every ten feet I had to stop and tie the sack up and dump it out and jump on the tractor again because they couldn't find any help at that time. So it was a great experience.

**EU:** And what was your major then at OSC?

**WS:** I went into Ag Economics Farm Management because that gave me the idea that if I got into Extension I would be able to use that in my Extension work in farm management. And of course, it included a lot of economics courses but it also included courses in the crops and livestock and so on, some of the advanced courses in those. So, I thought it was

a pretty good choice to make. I enjoyed farm management. The head of the department was my advisor and just a find gentleman, D. Curtis Mumford. A real fine gentleman and so we had a good time there.

**EU:** So was working for Extension always a career goal?

**WS:** Well, it was in the back of my mind all the time. I thought Extension would be a great outfit. In fact, a little foolish thing, one time I got a letter from an Extension agent, with an enclosure, a franking slip in it – I'm not sure if you are familiar with that, but you always had to put a franking slip in saying "this is a project of Oregon State University Extension Service," and I even kept that in my scrapbook because he had signed it. It was mimeographed of course. And then I decided I would like to be in Extension. When I graduated from college, I looked into Extension and there were no openings at the time, but a friend of mine, a year ahead of me in college, was the field supervisor [director] of the production marketing administration in Jefferson County, Oregon in Madras and they were looking for a field supervisor to do some work over there so I hired on with them.

[0:10:00]

**EU:** Could you talk a little bit about that --- production and marketing administration?

**WS:** It was the old "three cs" program, Commodity Credit Corporation, I think. It was a depression-era farm program for the New Deal and we became the Agriculture Stabilization Conservation Service and now Farm Services Administration. But I worked at PMA at the time for four and a half months. It was a full-time job, but I did enough stuff ahead so I had time off and when the 4-H agent in Jefferson County couldn't make it to 4-H Camp, I volunteered to take his place for a week. And so I worked with a couple of the agents down there at the 4-H Camp and got recommendations from the county agents from both Crook and Jefferson counties to be in Extension, so they called the Extension Director and said it looks like Schroeder might have some possibilities. They didn't hire anybody without checking with him first, interviewing him and going through all that. And so, I got a call from Charlie Smith who was Associate Director saying, "I hear you're interested in Extension; come on down, I'd like to talk to you." I think I mentioned to you about the poker...

**EU:** Maybe you could tell that story again?

**WS:** Hollis Ottaway, who was the chairman in Jefferson County, just a real prince of a guy, said, "Now Walt, Charlie's a poker player. Now he knows how to keep a poker face; and you're going to have to do the same thing when he starts talking salaries." And so I went down; I was making, I think, \$2,800 a year with PMA and Charlie Smith talked to me and said, "Well, I think we can probably hire you and we can pay you \$3,000." I thought, oh....I didn't show expression, I just kept a blank face. \$3,000, that's a lot better than I'm making right now and I'd love to work with Extension, but I knew what Hollis had said, so I kept my mouth shut and thought for a little bit, and he says "\$3,200." And I said, "Oh, that sounds so good." But I kept my poise a little bit and he said "\$3,600, that's my last offer; take it or leave it." "I'll take it." [chuckle]. He said, "Where do you want to go? We have an opening in Hood River County doing fruits, vegetables or in Coos County doing 4-H." I said that I could do 4-H; I like to work with the kids so I'd like to go to Coos County which was a very good choice.

**EU:** So you started in 1949?

**WS:** '49, right. I think it was November of '49 and I got right into it and just loved the people in Coos County. They were just so friendly and so helpful. As I mentioned earlier yesterday, I met quite a few people who were really people-persons. Whenever I had any trouble, I could go to them and visit with them, as well as the senior county agent, to get some advice from him and they were very, very helpful to me and made it so much easier in my work.

**EU:** Could you talk a little bit about the work you did those first years in Coos County? You said you were the 4-H agent?

**WS:** Yes, there were two 4-H agents there. I was responsible for the agriculture programs, the forestry and all the other programs except for home economics. And of course, I worked with home economics in training and lining up programs where we did both leaders in home economics and the other programs. And so we lined up training meetings, we went to achievement programs where the kids were given their awards every year. I think that was a valuable experience to go to each community and meet the people. We worked on the 4-H Camp. We had a tri-county 4-H Camp with Coos, Curry and Douglas counties.

**EU:** These were summer camps?

**WS:** Yes, summer camps. We had a livestock and crops judging tour and I worked with that. We took turns hosting that. The camp was always held at the same place in Coos County because it was centrally located, but the judging tour we went to a different county each time of the three. Then newsletters, training meetings, just all kinds of stuff that we did.

**EU:** How would you describe your relation as a county agent with the folks in Corvallis?

**WS:** Corvallis was good. Yes, I had a very good relationship with the folks there. Especially with the folks on the 4-H staff, which was where I was located on the 4-H team and Doc Allen was still the chair, the 4-H leader and Burton Hutton, Cal Monroe, Winifred Gillen, Esther Taskerud, all just wonderful people and they just gave us all kinds of encouragement and anytime we needed help, we just had to call for it and we got lots of help.

**EU:** So you worked closely, then, with the area specialists?

**WS:** Well, mostly with the 4-H staff. Of course, I was not involved in the agriculture program but when I first went on staff I was sent around to every specialist and visited with the crops specialists, the food specialist, the livestock specialist, so I could get a feel for what the Extension program was totally instead of just my 4-H specialty type thing. And I was very impressed with the specialist, the 4-H specialists and others. They were really very intelligent, very sharp people. And people who knew how to work with other people. So I was very much impressed with that and of course, that increased my enthusiasm for Extension.

[0:15:40]

**EU:** The first time, then, you were in Coos County, only for a couple of years?

**WS:** Well, I was there just a little less than a year because the Korean War started in July of 1950 and I was registered with the Draft Board in Corvallis and we were the first ones called up after the Korean War started. And I think there were seven or eight of us that were drafted and served in the military for two years; almost two years.

**EU:** Did you take a leave of absence?

**WS:** Yes, I got a leave of absence, so my job was still there when I got back and they hired a fellow who could take my place while I was gone. He left and they hired another one, who incidentally, became a very good friend and the best man at our wedding. I had a great time there. I just loved this county – I wanted to get back there. As soon as I was released from the military, I went back there.

**EU:** Could you talk a little bit about your service? Where did you go? Did you go overseas?

**WS:** Our training was in Fort Ord, California, which is no longer a military camp, but about half of the fellows from our group went over to Korea and the other half, and for some reason, the Lord had it in for us, I guess, so you guys are going to go to Germany. Oh, what a break that was! All my ancestors are from Germany and so I thought, what a wonderful opportunity. So we went to Germany and I was in the Fourth Division and I was a rocket launcher gunner, bazooka gunner.

**EU:** Where were you stationed in Germany?

**WS:** I was stationed in Schweinfurt and Schweinfurt was the ball-bearing center of Germany and during the war it was bombed terribly. Even when we got there in 1950-51, it there was still tons and tons of bomb damage they hadn't completely cleared up yet but they were working on it. By the time we left, they had most of it cleaned up. And then, we served on the NATO forces, the reconstituted Fourth Division had been demobilized after the Second World War. But it was mobilized again and we were the first groups into that. And so we were in Germany; there were Fourth Division scattered all over Germany as well as the constabulary and then the First Division was also over there and our job was to stop the Russians from coming across the border until our other troops could get ready to meet them further back. So I guess we didn't realize we were actually sacrificial lambs, because if they came across we wouldn't be able to stop them very long.

And anyway, I had a chance to get 45 days furlough while I was over there, so I travelled all over Europe. Another fellow and I hitch-hiked through England and Scotland and some of those places. We got a chance to see some agricultural things as well as the people living there. I was really impressed with most of the countries except France. Anyway, so my last few months there, they didn't demobilize, but they scattered the Fourth Division. That's when they started integrating the military. Before they had just black regiments and white regiments and they integrated them. So our outfit was scattered all over the country.

And I was sent down to the First Division at Bamberg not very far from Schweinfurt and I became a squad leader of a weapons squad – machine gun and bazooka. I was the squad leader there for the last three or four months, until I got discharged. They offered me a promotion and sargency but I said, no thanks. I've had enough.

Is this a good place to stop?

**EU:** OK. This is the end of Part 1.

[0:19:29]

**Elizabeth Uhlig:** This is Part 2 of the oral history interview with Walt Schroeder.

Walt, when we broke we were talking about your service - career and you were in Germany. Could you talk a little bit about your family? I know you are interested in genealogy and family history.

**Walt Schroeder:** Well, my entire family, all my ancestors were from Germany from one area or another, some of them coming two or three generations ago, some just one or two generations ago and so Germany had a special interest to me. And while I was stationed over there, I had a chance to visit with a cousin once or twice removed in Bremerhaven and get some information about the family there. I hadn't done my genealogy work very much before that and so I didn't know where the rest of the family came from. It wasn't until Sally and I went back after my sabbatical that I knew some of the towns and we were able to get to some of them where we ran into people who had known my great-grandfather, for example. Several of them were in the eastern German section, the Russian zone, so even then we could not get across to see them. It was an exciting experience to experience where my ancestors had lived coming from that country over there.

**EU:** So you were able to trace back your family history.

**WS:** Yes, I traced it back after being there. It increased my interest in the family history. I did a lot of it while I was on sabbatical leave. I did a lot of work in Wisconsin. They have a wonderful genealogical library there; on weekends or when I had time and I found out where a lot of the family had come from and I was very fortunate to find two branches of the family that had "von" in their name which means they were, you know, kind of upper class, and in those cases they had, I don't know what the word is in German, but they had a family history already written and I got one of them that went back to the year 1290 and got it translated and got my family history all the way back to that generation. And also did Sally's at the same time and got her back to the pre-Revolutionary War days and in some parts of England and Germany, so it's a combined genealogy of both of our families together. So, it was kind of fun to work on that.

**EU:** When you came back, then, to the United States, when you finished your service, did you come back then to Coos County?

**WS:** Yes, I did. We came back to Fort Lewis. Our outfit, all the western coast guys, flew from Fort Benning back to Fort Lewis and we were discharged there but we were told that you got to be here by such and such a date which was a week away. Just hang around and we said, wait a minute, now we are close to home, we aren't going to just hang around here for seven days when we need to be here on that day to get discharged, so a lot of us just headed for home. Nothing ever came from it, we were never charged with anything. I was hitchhiking, wearing a uniform of course.

One ride dropped me off in Salem, right close to the fairgrounds, so I said "Heh, I'm going to stop and see some of my old friends on the way back from Germany." So I went to the 4-H Building which was a real old building on the Fairgrounds and one of my friends, a gal who was a 4-H agent in Lane County, brought this young good looking lady over to me and said "Walt, this is Sally Hartz. She's out here from Nebraska." Well, hello, how are you and shortly after we had annual conference and I found out that she liked to sing and liked square dancing and folk dancing so I invited her out to a folk

dance in Corvallis that night and one thing led to another and pretty soon we were married. We've been married 54 years now.

**EU:** And Sally, herself was 4-H.

**WS:** Yes, she was a Home Extension agent in Nebraska for two years doing 4-H and Home Economics and then she came to Clackamas County as 4-H agent. We had eight agents at that time in Clackamas County and so she worked there. It was a long drive from Coquille on the old highway – I-5 wasn't in then – all the way to Oregon City to see her. That was a long way to go, but worth it.

**EU:** So when did you get married then?

**WS:** April of 1953. We met at State Fair, early September of '52. So less than a year later we were married.

**EU:** Was it common for a married couple to both be working for the Extension Service?

**WS:** No, at that time you could not both be working for Extension. Husband and wife could not be working for Extension, not only in the same county but in the neighboring counties. Later on, that policy changed. It was after it was too late to do any good for us and so they did have agents working in neighboring counties that were married and in some cases even in the same county. I can understand why that shouldn't be, because if you have problems at home you bring them to the office and that's no good either. So there was reason for having that ruling.

[0:25:06]

**EU:** So, what kind of work did you do in Coos County, then?

**WS:** Well, it was primarily 4-H work, doing all the different activities in 4-H --- county fairs, camps, tours, that kind of stuff. And I also was assigned the small animals component. There were a few people that raised mink and rabbits in Coos County so I worked with that group on a very limited basis, so that was my experience in ag in Coos County. Then we did a tour - the agents themselves toured other counties to see what was going on in the various programs and so I had a chance to participate in that, too. That was one of my earliest introductions to Curry County, even though we had studied some things in farm management about Curry County land use work in college.

**EU:** So, how long did you stay in Coos County, then?

**WS:** Well, I started in '49, was drafted in '50, went back in '52 and then stayed there until '56 when my sabbatical came due and so I took an opportunity to go back to school. We were married but didn't have any children at the time which was an ideal time to do it and the word was going around that pretty soon all Extension agents were going to have to have a masters degree or a Ph.D. and so I just saw the handwriting on the wall and figured this is the time to do it.

So I applied for sabbatical and I was offered a sabbatical and went back to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wisconsin and there were several of us from Oregon back there and had a wonderful time there, a good experience, good classes, good programs so I enjoyed it.

Another thing we did in Coos County, we had an old exhibit building that we were using, it was very very poor for 4-H exhibits and so in fact the first week after our honeymoon we went down to a work party to help put this new building up so it was a pretty good sized building; probably 100 x 200 foot building that volunteers put together. We had some of the guys run cats and they cleared the ground and got donations of lumber from the different companies and all kinds of equipment and we built that building over the period of that summer. And it was a great experience and a great accomplishment. That building is still being used by 4-H up there.

**EU:** When you were in Wisconsin, what did you study for your masters?

**WS:** Well, I had a number of classes, Principles of Extension, any number of courses that would be helpful in Extension work, working with people, news releases, media relationships, any number of things like that and I had a graduate assistantship that helped pay a little bit toward my expenses. And I was working with the Department of Rural Sociology

on a study of young farmers and their involvement with Extension. It was a large, study and I was given one portion of it to do and it was very interesting to do that.

**EU:** How long were you there?

**WS:** About nine months. We got there in September and we left there in June. I guess that's about nine months or thereabouts. Didn't even wait to get my degree. They sent it to me afterwards. But we wanted to go to Europe and Sally had been working as a home agent in the neighboring county in Wisconsin so we ordered a car to be delivered in England and picked it up and just drove all around England, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France and Belgium, Luxemburg. Had a great travelling on our own which was frustrating for Sally because if you are on a tour everything is taken care of...you know you are going to have your next meal and where you are going to stay overnight. But we just played it by ear; every night we would have to find a place to eat and a place to stay. So we stayed in the hostels, camp grounds, hotels, motels and one night, much to her chagrin, we stayed overnight in a roadside work building, a work shack and she was so concerned that the workmen were going to come and find us in there. It was raining and so we just stopped and the doors were open so we went in. There were a couple of benches we slept on. So we had a great time.

**EU:** So you also visited family then?

**WS:** We visited families over there that we knew from the IFYE programs here in this country as well as referrals from friends and we visited a lot of agricultural opportunities over there, including several Extension offices to see how they were operating Extension in those countries.

[0:29:59]

**EU:** Would you explain what this IFYE program was?

**WS:** Yes, the International Farm Youth Exchange program. It started about 1951 where young Americans were sent to foreign countries, they were 4-H club members were sent to foreign countries to learn about agriculture and 4-H in those countries and by the same token those from other countries came here. And so one of our trips to Northern Ireland was a International Farm Youth Exchange student who had been in Sally's county in Nebraska and we had that relationship so we stayed with them for three days on their farm in Northern Ireland and had tours and saw things that the normal tourist would not see. That was true in staying with the friends of friends in Germany. We got to see things we wouldn't see otherwise and the same in Denmark as well. That was a great experience.

**EU:** So the Extension Service in Germany, was it called the same?

**WS:** No, it was similar; it was called Land Jugends und Beretungs Dienst means Agricultural Youth and Farm Service type thing. They had similar goals that we had and very similar operations. I think they learned a lot from America.

**EU:** That was probably a result of the occupation?

**WS:** The occupation. Right.

**EU:** So, when you came back to the United States then, after your trip in Europe, did you go back to Coos County then?

**WS:** No, we did not go back to Coos County. After the service, yes, we did go back to Coos County, but after we came back from the graduate work, we came back and they had an opening at Florence. There was no Extension office there, so it was a pioneer opportunity. Florence was part of Lane County, but it was so far away that the agents didn't get over there very often; just a very primitive road over there called Route F. In the meantime, they improved the road so after four or five years they closed that office down. But in the meantime, I had the opportunity to work with a home agent in that office to set up 4-H programs and agricultural and home economics programs and we increased the 4-H enrollment by thousands of percentage because before they only made one or two clubs but we got eight or ten different clubs going over there at that time. Because it was virgin ground and it was easy to get a lot of 4-H clubs going. So it sounds like a lot, but it was a case where it had not had much opportunity before even though the agents were good out of Eugene, they didn't get over there that much. But the firsthand experience being on the ground, made a difference.



And while we were in Florence our two oldest sons were born. So we had a lot of things to remember about Florence.

**EU:** So how long did you stay in Florence, then?

**WS:** About four years, I think it was. A little over four years. And then as I said, the highway got better and so it was easier to over and get back and forth, it got paved, got a tunnel, made it a lot easier to get back and forth, and so they closed the office there for awhile. I guess they opened up a little later again, but I think they closed it again after that. That was another experience.

**EU:** And then you moved into Corvallis?

**WS:** Yes, when they closed the office, there were no county positions open, so they made me Extension agent-at-large which was kind of a floating thing. It marked timed, you are doing something worthwhile, but you're not assigned to any county. And while there I had done quite a bit of work in Coos County and western Lane about getting 4-H camps organized and apparently they needed somebody to help statewide, so I was asked to help develop 4-H camps and help train the agents and those already going all over the state of Oregon and so I had a chance to travel east to west, north to south, all over Oregon organizing and helping agents with 4-H camps.

Another one was working on school forest conservation tours which was to help give kids good environmental education about the proper use, the wise use or conservation of our forests. And I wrote several publications on that working with Charlie Ross, who was Extension Forester, and went out and worked on a number of things helping get the agents get them started.

Then I also, at the same time, worked with Charlie Ross writing 4-H Forestry bulletins. I authored the Advanced 4-H Forestry Program so I had a lot of fun doing that, too. And then outdoor recreation – Extension was just getting into outdoor recreation and so I had a chance to do that and one of my fine memories of that was being invited back to Washington D.C. There were five recreation people from the United States invited back to advise the Department of Agriculture Extension Service what to do with outdoor recreation. So again, I had a chance to meet with guys from Florida, Georgia, Wisconsin, and all over the nation working on outdoor recreation and Extension's role in that area.

[0:35:19]

**EU:** Was that related then, you said you had 4-H campus and you took the young people out. These were summer camps?

**WS:** They were 4-H summer camps, yes.

**EU:** Throughout the state, or where did you go?

**WS:** Well, they were in the usual counties that had them, where they would be combined. Umatilla County and central Oregon counties joined together. There were counties all over the state that had 4-H camps. They were just starting them up or needed a little bit of help getting them going. And that's typical of Extension; you meet with an awful lot of people who are doing a lot of things and you gather the good ideas and you can spread those out to other people and so that was my role in the 4-H camping program to take good ideas and share them with the agents to improve their camps.

**EU:** Now, were those camps different from – you talked about the recreation program?

**WS:** Yes, they were two different things.

**EU:** Because you had the ability to or the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C., did that give you a perspective about the 4-H in Oregon?

**WS:** Yes, it reminded me that we had the best 4-H program in States.

**EU:** Why was that?

**WS:** Because a lot of the people involved; the leadership involved, the Extension staff, the 4-H leaders. Every state had good programs, they were all different. We had what we called "project clubs" here in Oregon and they were just centered

around one particular project. And in a lot of the states they were "community clubs" so they had all different kinds of projects in one group and maybe an individual leader was responsible for each phase of it. Someone on the livestock end, somebody on the home ec end. Oregon had some of those community clubs where there were not enough people to have individual clubs, but we had an excellent 4-H program. I think it was largely because of the people on the state staff and our county staffs.

**EU:** I know you have written some books and one of the books you showed me, I was looking through...no, I'm sorry, you put together a slide show about marketing. You talked about all the different county agents; you mentioned them in different counties and the programs they worked on. I think you talked in there about Mr. Ballard. Could you talk a little bit about that?

**WS:** Mr. Ballard was a genius at working with people and knowing which direction... He was a visionary and knew which direction Extension should go and he inculcated that in all of his assistant directors, associate directors and in the staff. I don't know of anyone on the staff who did not idolize Mr. Ballard. Because he was a down to earth farm boy, just a wonderful job of working with agents, treating them like human beings and just a real great guy. And so all of us had a lot of respect for Mr. Ballard. And some of the directors after that, too, were good, but he was a special individual. And I think I only worked ... I'm not sure when Frank retired, but I know I went to his retirement dinner and so I probably worked with him for a very short time, but I was just a small fish in the big pond, so he probably didn't even know who I was. But I knew who he was.

[0:38:54]

**EU:** In your work as an agent, could you talk a little bit about your relationship on the one hand your relationship with Corvallis, with the main office in Corvallis and the area specialists, but then also your relationship with the farmers and people you worked with in the counties.

**WS:** Okay, as far as the state, we got along beautifully with just almost every specialist. They were down to earth individuals and came down and helped you when you needed them. There were a few that were a little difficult to get them to come down and help sometimes, but we were a far-away county. But for the most part, they were just very helpful 4-H-wise as well as agricultural-wise and I'm sure the home ec agents had the same good experiences that we did with the specialist. The specialists were knowledgeable and they would share their knowledge with you and come down and help you with programs. We had numbers of specialists come down and share the information with the people. We would set up meetings and have them down to share and then working with the individuals.

I felt, I think I mentioned this off the record the other day, that it's wise to get the smell of the hive before you start really pushing yourself around the county. I have seen too many people, not necessarily Extension, come into a county and say, "this is the way it's going to be; this is the way it's going to be" without getting a feel of what the community is all about. I think that's very important, to get the smell of the hive, so to speak, to know what that county needs.

We do that through advisory committees, we had 4-H advisory committees, home ec advisory, livestock advisory and overall Extension advisory councils and those people were student of the land; they know what was going on locally and so they could help you get your feet on the ground and say, "this is where we've been going, they is where we need to go," and they were usually some of the top individuals. For example, there are good farmers and there are bad farmers and you usually try to pick out the ones that were visionaries and knew what they were doing and then hopefully bring along the rest of them. That's the job of Extension to bring them along.

**Sally Schroeder:** I just wanted to say – maybe you better turn me on...

**EU:** This is Sally, this Walt's wife, and she wants to ...

**SS:** I just wanted to say, and this is a side comment ... to get that thing going in the Legislature, he adopted this same pattern of getting input from the district into his legislative decisions. He had advisory groups, he had an overall advisory group that he met with and he had a reputation in the Legislature for getting the most input from constituents in the whole state. Because that was the principle that he operated on in the Legislature and it worked very well there, too. I think our people in our district were more knowledgeable about what was going on in the Legislature because of his reaching out

and sending bills out for the evaluation of his advisory group in that area of what was being considered. And it's a good system. It works in other areas than Extension.

**EU:** And so that's one thing that you developed from Extension, listening to the farmers and the ....

**WS:** Right. And I think I mentioned earlier, off the record, that when I first came to the county, I spent time visiting, going up and down the roads visiting the farmers and seeing what their concerns were and how Extension could help them. I think that stood in good stead too.

**EU:** So when you worked ... so you were an agent-at-large for several years?

**WS:** Yes, about two years, I guess.

**EU:** And then, where did you move next?

**WS:** Then we went to Washington County. I loved the work I was doing and I stayed there until we got a major project done which was a camping workshop for the entire state of Oregon. We had a thing up at Camp Adams in Clackamas County where we brought agents from all over Oregon and had a camping workshop and I wanted to get that done, along with Lois Redman who was on the state 4-H staff before I left that position. And the position was closing out because they had some county openings at that time and one of them was Washington County which was a wonderful agricultural county and very difficult one to follow because one of the top 4-H agents in the state was there – Joe Cox – who later became Extension Director. And he was a wonderful guy and a very difficult one to follow because he was so well loved. But we managed to get by.

[0:44:09]

**EU:** After Washington County, you came back to the Coast?

**WS:** Yes, I was offered a position as Chairman of the Curry County Extension Office. That was in '67 and so I jumped at that opportunity to get back on the Coast and frankly, the state agent-at-large job was a good one but it was a little different from a county agent and that's one reason I prefer county work because you are working directly with the people who are your clientele, whereas on the state staff you are working primarily with other agents who are also people, but it's a different relationship. I preferred working directly with the people rather than just working with other agents, even though that was a good experience.

**EU:** So then, you stayed here in Curry County in Gold Beach?

**WS:** Yes, for 16 years before I retired.

**EU:** And of course then you've stayed here since then.

**WS:** Yes, we've stayed here. We've been here 40 years now, 16 years as Extension agent; retired 24 years and of course the thing that was beautiful about that is that we were far enough away from Corvallis that they didn't bother you too much and another thing it's such a beautiful area, such wonderful people and we had the programs. When I first started here there was a 4-H agent here too. But he left within a month or two after I came here. Budget cuts necessitated his being cut out so just a home agent and myself and so we did the 4-H club program, agriculture, forestry, marine science, community resource development, I think I mentioned forestry – we did all those things until eventually we started getting area agents in forestry and marine science and eventually in horticulture, but that was after I retired. But I had an opportunity to work with all those groups and it was a really difficult job balancing, in other words giving them all the time they deserved rather than going all one area, doing all 4-H and stuff like that. But to balance that was very difficult and from all the feedback I've heard, apparently I did the job okay. So, I enjoyed the 4-H club work and I enjoyed working with the farm people and forestry people, all kinds of things like that that were just exciting.

**EU:** Could you talk about some of the specific programs you worked on; for example, in agriculture, the lilies?

**WS:** I worked with the lily industry. I was not a lily expert by any stretch of the imagination, but I worked with the growers and their organization and many other things that I worked with the growers on. There were only about maybe 20 growers when I first came here. I don't think it was my fault, but there are only nine of them left. They kept selling out or guys buying up lily operations and so it was a very good group to work with; very well organized and it's a multi-million dollar industry in Curry County.

The other major horticulture industry was cranberries and that was in the north end of Curry. The lilies were in the south end of Curry and also in Del Norte County...

**EU:** In California.

**WS:** In California so I worked with both the California and Oregon lily growers because some of them had land on both sides of the line. So rather than divide it and say, you do this in California and I'll do it here, I worked with both sides of the line along with John Lenz who was a Humboldt agent and was a man who worked with lily growers on both sides as well. So, we worked very well together with California.

And then in northern Curry, the cranberry industry – Art Poole was an expert in cranberries from Coos County and that's where the major portion of the cranberries were grown, but they were growing rapidly here in Curry County and so rather than both of us becoming tooled up on cranberries, Art took care of the cranberries in northern Curry as well. I did a very little bit of work with them, but Art did the technical work with the cranberry growers. So that's where it stood on that. Then I worked with the livestock producers; the livestock association, forestry groups.

**EU:** Okay, for the livestock, what animals?

**WS:** Primarily beef and sheep. We had about 25,000 head of sheep at the time I came here, breeding ewes. Now there's about 5,000 because of a number of things – markets, as well as predation by bear, cougar, coyote, bobcat and things like that. So most of the sheep growers have now gone into beef. It's a little easier to keep the predators away from beef, but they still do the calves occasionally. Then we had workshops for the beef producers and for the sheep producers with the videos, slides, specialists coming in, just all kinds of activities. And as I say, I worked very closely with the livestock association, another great bunch of people. You could tell a lot of stories about them.

**EU:** Was there much dairying around here?

**WS:** Let's see, there were about five dairies when I came here and there are two left. But again, Lynn Cannon from Coos County who was a dairy specialist, and so he took care of the two dairies that were left in the county – whatever work was done with them and I also worked very closely with Lynn Cannon, another great guy on crops. We did a lot of experimental work on fertilization on hill land pastures in northern Curry County. It was equal distance to both of us and so we would get together and work on some of these projects. So, we did work together with the neighboring counties. Did not work very much with Josephine County which was behind the mountains. But on the Coast here it was a little easier getting back and forth.

[0:50:04]

**EU:** Okay, then you mentioned Forestry. What kind of programs did you work in within Forestry?

**WS:** We had a couple of forest demonstration plots; one in the south end and one in the north end of the county. We kept measurements on trees and harvesting techniques, whereas the harvesting values of thinning for example. We had school forest conservation tours to them every year for sixth graders. We worked individually with some of the farmers on their forestry programs until we got the forestry specialist in Coos County and then they took over that responsibility. But when I first started we did that.

And the same was true with Marine Science. We put on adult education programs in celestial navigation, seamanship, things like that. Bringing in experts either from OSU or local fishermen that were well trained to give them training on proper methods of fishing and ways to save money by doing fishing properly. And then again, we got a Marine agent in Del Norte County and one in Coos County that took over that responsibility. But when we first came here, I had those responsibilities as well.

And then community resource development – I had a lot of things to do with that. And that was wide open. One was a tourist hospitality program. One of our local motel owners came in when I first came down here and said, "Walt, we have a problem with tourism here. We've got great potential but a lot of our employees don't know how to handle tourists when they come in and they drive them off someplace." So we got a committee together in Gold Beach, called the Central Curry Hospitality Committee, of bankers, pharmacists, charter boat operators, guides, motel owners, you name it, service station owners, and developed a program to train the employers first about how important it was to keep people here a little bit longer. One more day here meant this much more money for our community's economy.

Then after that, we said we would like to train your employees; are you willing to send your employees on company time to come to these meetings? You bet. So we had over a hundred employees come to the first couple meetings. And we had people from the tourist information offices, we had a recreation specialist from OSU come in. We had local fellows put together a slide series on things to do in the area to keep people here a little bit longer and we presented that program and got really good results. As a result, we started another committee in Brookings and one in Port Orford and we were even invited to Bandon to help them and then to Florence to help them with tourist hospitality. So that first committee in central Curry went to Florence and put on a program up there to get their program started. And we were also invited to the Oregon Coast Looks Ahead Conference to give a similar program there. So tourism was a very important thing. The value of tourism went up from 16 million to 22 million in a very short time. So it paid off.

And we also hired a couple of young ladies in each of the three towns; we called them "hospitality hostesses" and they had a little green van they drove around and were actually roving tourist hospitality people. They stopped to see people who were looking around to see what to do and gave them all kinds of information and brochures and stuff.

Another one was a flop, I thought. It worked out beautifully to start with. But in 1971 every county in Oregon was ordered to get a land use planning program. And if you didn't do it by 1975 or '76, the state would do it for you. So we organized committees in five of the communities, ten people per committee in Agnes, Langlois, Port Orford, Gold Beach and Brookings to develop a land use plan, zoning as well as the ordinances and stuff and we got it done.

And one of the guys that was a field officer for the LCDC – are you familiar with LCDC?

**EU:** No.

**WS:** Land Conservation and Development Committee, Corporation, Commission. It was a state agency. One of the guys said that was the best plan we have every seen in Oregon. The state rejected it; they shoved their own down our throat. So it was three years, almost, wasted. Then in the meantime we had organized a county planning commission, and I was assigned to be the educational director of that so I did a lot of educational programs.

[0:54:39]

And then the adult education programs that we talked about. I have a bunch of stuff in the papers I gave you about adult education, so that when the Southwestern Oregon Community College came into the area we were doing a lot of adult education programs at a very reasonable cost with outside as well as local people sharing their knowledge with the participants. And those went over very, very well and then when Southwest Oregon Community College came in, we turned it over to them and said you take it; it's your job now.

**EU:** What kinds of courses were you teaching?

**WS:** Well, the first one was Geology of Curry County. We had Dr. Elmo Stephenson, who was the president of Southern Oregon College came over several nights and gave us some lectures on the geology of this area and then field trips. We actually could go out and see some of the things we were talking about. We had Basic Seamanship, Farriership, a class in horseshoeing, a lot of people wanted to shoe their own horses; the Flowers of Curry County, Birds of Curry, shrubs and trees, oh gosh, there was a whole bunch of things we did, edible plants – I think they are all listed in that thing I gave you – so you can find most of them there. But I think that was an important thing at the time because there was nothing available like that before it. Oh, another thing we did was a History of Curry County. We had a local gal who was quite a historian come in and do that. As a result, we got the Curry Historical Society organized and now it's a going concern. The museum is right across from the fairgrounds; you might have seen it down there. So, it's a real going outfit now.

**EU:** Okay, let's take a break. This is the end of Part 2.

[0:56:29]

**Elizabeth Uhlig:** This is Part 3 of the Extension Service Oral History interview with Walt Schroeder.

Walt, could you talk a little bit more about some of the programs you worked in; for example, the super tours?

**Walt Schroeder:** Okay, I mentioned earlier that when I was in Coos and also Curry County we used to have a tri-county livestock judging tour. It got to be that there were really very few kids involved in livestock and that seemed to be an anachronism; we didn't need to spend a lot of time on that, so the Coos County agent and I, whom I worked with in Coos County earlier when we were both agents there, started a super tour program which gave kids an opportunity to see careers outside of their own community. And so we would get a bus or two and we travelled all over the state of Oregon to different places. One place this year and one place another year to look at different career opportunities, different enterprises and things like that. One year we went to Portland, I think it was, I get it confused with too many things, but we went to Swan Island to see truck manufacturing, for example. Did we go to the zoo that trip, Sally? We went to different businesses in the Portland metro area to see what was going on up there to give kids an idea that there is a wider world than you are used to down at home. A lot of the kids in Curry County never really got out of Curry County.

**SS:** Especially after the PI ended.

**WS:** Yeah, after the PI, Pacific International Livestock Exhibition, ended. Used to have livestock kids go to that, but one year we had a maritime thing. We went onboard a ship, we looked at the port operations, we did a whole bunch of stuff like that that had to do with maritime. On another one, we went to Klamath area and we looked at the Klamath Reclamation project, the Irrigation Reclamation Project, a horse farm, the Modoc Indian Battle Beds there in the lava beds and a number of other things that pertained to that particular area. One year we went to Salem to the State Capitol, the mission bottom with a lot of agriculture out there, oh gosh, where else? I have it all written down someplace in my annual reports. In other words, we tried to expand the knowledge that arises in kids by going to different things rather than just having a livestock judging contest type thing and that was particularly a part of that.

Another one was our 4-H marketing program. It had been going here in the county when I came here but we greatly expanded it for I think sixth graders. And I developed a set of slides – 181 slides – showing the different phases of marketing from advertising packaging, retailing, wholesaling, just the whole line of things and we used that in the schools to show the kids the opportunities in marketing careers and then culminating with a tour to the marketing center which is in Coos Bay and we made arrangements for kids to go through different stores and businesses. J.C. Penney, for example, a manager just welcomed us in and they showed us behind the scenes how a big department store works. We went to distribution things for foods, freezer plants, automotive shops, all kinds of things like that to see the opportunities and careers in those areas. And all of those included advertising all the way through to the final sales, including the packaging and everything like that.

I got a national award for that. And fortunately, it was during the bi-centennial back in Richmond, Virginia and our whole family went back so we had a chance to put something on both ends of the trip and they never did pay my first class airfare, but we got us all on tourist class.

**EU:** Who gave you that award?

**WS:** Can't remember now who it was.

**EU:** But it was specifically for ....

**WS:** It was a company, yes, and there were several agents from I think eight counties and coincidentally enough, one of the guys from Kansas was a guy who was in the same company in the Army that I was. So we have kept in touch since then. But those are a couple of the things.

[1:00:54]

Our 4-H trail ride had been going here and very successfully here. We made a few changes in it that I hope made it for the better.

**EU:** These trail rides – you went out on horses?

**WS:** Yes, on horseback for eight days and half way through we would get a food drop – either a car would come in with food to refresh our supplies or we would take the horses out with pack saddles to the trail head to pick up food. Or we had aerial drops where they couldn't get in, you had have aerial drops, so one of the Dads would have a plan and fly over and drop a roll of toilet paper out to see which way the wind was blowing and then he dropped the parachutes with the food. And oh what an exciting day that was when the food came in! It was a real experience because it got kids, I don't know if I can say this or not, but away from home a little bit. They were on their own and they grew up a great deal in that eight days.

**EU:** These were high school aged?

**WS:** They were anywhere from age 11 to 19 and we had quite a variety. Anywhere from 10-25 kids would go on these trail rides, which seems like an awful lot of time to spend for a few kids but it was well worth it and it is one of the things that kids remember these days when I see them on the street. "Remember that trail ride? Wasn't that a great time?"

**SS:** They had qualifying trail rides in order for them to qualify.

**WS:** Yeah, they had to qualify. They had to go on a pre trail ride for an overnight to qualify to go on this trail ride and we very rarely had any problems. The kids had to make their own beds up, they had to do their own cooking; well, they had a cook, but they all had to share. Everybody had a job.

**EU:** And they all did excellent cooking?

**WS:** Well, not really. The yuck meal was an example. Sally said they elected to cook but really somebody volunteered to be cook and okay, you can be, we'll elect you.

**EU:** Did they every complain?

**WS:** They didn't complain; they wanted to be cook because they had experience the previous year or two. A lot of these kids had been on the trail ride for four or five years or maybe more so they had experience the year before as assistant cook and they wanted to be head cook. So it was the assistant cooks that got in trouble with the yuck meal, they didn't know, they didn't pay attention to what was going on. But that was a tremendous experience for kids. Of course we had 4-H camp here and that was a five day camp.

**SS:** And county fair...

**WS:** And county fair and Achievement Days when I was 4-H county agent here we went out to every community and presented their achievement awards at the end of the 4-H year. That way, the parents were involved totally because all the parents would come see their kids get their awards. They don't do that anymore now. I think it was a mistake not to do it.

**EU:** Could you talk a little bit about your involvement in the state and in national organizations? I believe you were in the Oregon County Agricultural Agents Association.

**WS:** Yes, I was very much involved in, I joined right away, the Oregon....well, I guess every agent was expected to join the Oregon County Agents Association and it was a very good group, a very serious group. We had a fun group associated with it called the Bull Association. We all carried canes with the number of years of service on it and we had a lot of fun with those canes.

**EU:** Was that the cane you showed me that had the black stripes around it?

**WS:** Yes, they had black rings around it....

**EU:** For each year...

**WS:** For each year you were in Extension, right.

**EU:** And then at the top and the bottom, if you had a gold ring...

**WS:** A quarter-inch gold ring was at the bottom, that meant you retired and the gold ring at the top – the half-inch gold ring (the other one was about a quarter-inch) the gold ring at the top was the past president. And I was president in 1980 of the Oregon County Agents Association.

And then I got involved in the national association by attending meetings. My first one was in Seattle and then I went to a number of them and got to be appointed as vice chairman, or regional chairman, of a committee or two and then later on I was named national chairman for two or three years of the National Professional Training Committee and as such we had a lot of training activities for the agents-at-large or agents all over the country. We had a marketing program at Chicago Mercantile Exchange that had to put together to bring agents from all over the States to learn about hedging in marketing livestock. And I did that for two years. Again, that was a great experience, meeting agents from all over the country.

**EU:** When you say, "hedging," what does that mean?

**WS:** Well, hedging is a method of marketing, another words you set a price for your product when the prices are where you think they ought to be and then if the value of that product goes down, you still get the amount you hedged for. But you also lose if the product goes up when you sell it. So hedging means to set in at a price where you know you can make a profit before the market takes over. They do that in a lot of commodities – hedging. We learned all about how to do that in this marketing program. And we had other programs that we carried out. The agents got recognition for work they were doing in professional training as well as in other phases of Extension work.

[1:06:24]

**EU:** And then, you did get a national award? Was this from 4-H?

**WS:** Well both 4-H and ag. I got a distinguished service award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and a Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of 4-H Extension Agents. I belonged to both of those organizations and got awards for those.

**EU:** And that's when you had your trip paid to New York?

**WS:** That was for a different award, that was for the Marketing – they called it Career Education Program. I got that one, but the other one, I got my DSA in Connecticut, I think, New Haven, Connecticut.

**EU:** Could you talk a little bit – you were an agent during the '60s and '70s when there were so many changes going on in society. Could you talk a little bit about affirmative action and how that influenced your work?

**WS:** Well, the one thing about it is that at one time boys and girls as 4-H members we were all treated alike and pretty soon you have to say which ones are Indian, part Indian, which ones are Hispanic, which are Black, which ones are Caucasian, which ones are Oriental and it got so you had to figure out what ethnic group this group belonged to and before that they were just boys and girls and we treated them all alike. It got to be a problem because you had to do a lot of figuring. For example, one little girl was name Mandy Lopez – red hair and freckles. She looked no more like a Mexican than the man and the moon, but her Dad apparently was a man named Mendez so we had to put her in the Hispanic group. And the same was true of a lot of them. I think I mentioned to you also that at 4-H camp we had an Indian guy come in and speak one time to us and after the program we said how many of you boys and girls are part Indian. Almost every hand went up. We knew that couldn't be true. So that was the only problem I saw with it really was having to take the time to say okay, they are no longer just boys and girls, they are this kind of boy and girl.

**EU:** I wanted to ask you also about some of the changes you saw that happened in the Extension Service in the years you were there. For example, one time you talked about, you mentioned about the Conservation Service, the Soil Conservation Service?



**WS:** Yes, right. And I've seen this happening since I retired primarily; we no longer, for example have an ag agent in Curry County. There are ag agents that work out of Coos County – horticulture, forestry, and livestock work out of Coos County. They are good people and I'm not sure what they are doing, but as a result of not having an ag agent on the ground right here I feel, this may not be justified, but I feel that we have abdicated some of our responsibilities and right now the Soil Conservation Service is doing things that Extension Service used to do here in Curry County. I'm not sure this is true of the rest of the state, but the Soil Conservation Service is having field trips, they having tours, they are having all kinds of things that Extension used to have the sole responsibility for. And one time there was a memorandum of understanding that the Soil Conservation Service would do technical services, mapping and charting, and doing that kind of stuff and Extension would do the educational programs. That line has blurred now and so we are finding that other organizations are taking over the responsibility and I felt that having an ag agent in the county was really important, even though we are not a very important agricultural county but when you get involved in Forestry and Community Resource Development that's very important to have a person who has those responsibilities in the county.

[1:10:34]

**EU:** Are there other changes that you noticed? The relation between counties, for example, and Oregon State University?

**WS:** Well, one thing is that a lot of the counties now have Extension Districts and it is very fortunate that they do have Extension Districts. In other words, that is a taxing district. Because if they did not have a taxing district, many of the counties, especially and O&C counties [Oregon and California Revested Land Counties] that don't have the BLM money coming in, would probably just wipe out Extension because it's not mandated and they would have to go with the mandated services which are delineated in state statute and they don't have enough money to do the rest of them so Extension would be possibly out of the way.

Fortunately, after I left, Dora Rumsey spearheaded getting an Extension District in Curry County and I am afraid if it were not for that, Curry would not even have an Extension Service. And we've seen that happen in Multnomah County. I don't believe they had an Extension District up there. I may be wrong, but I believe that's the case. So, they no longer have an Extension Service in Multnomah County. In some counties, where there is a strong agricultural area they may still have it even in spite of not having an Extension Service District, but the coastal counties are not really agricultural counties and people think of Extension as being agriculture and 4-H and home economics. And unless there's enough people very much interested to fight for it, they could very well lose their support. So, that's a concern that I have.

**EU:** When we were doing these oral history interviews as part of the upcoming 100th anniversary of the Extension Service, can you give sort of a historical perspective, I mean some of the changes -- also a question is what are the best things about the Extension Service? The biggest contributions?

**WS:** I think the best service of the Extension Service was working with individuals and organizations to help them with agriculture, forestry, all of the things we have traditionally have done and making sure that is done properly with the support of the university and that's the backbone of the Extension Service is the university support. In other words, the technical support and educational support from the specialists, from the departments, the research departments, everybody else like that, making sure that the proper information gets out to the people and the only way they can do that is by Extension agents on the ground working with the individuals or groups with demonstrations showing how they can improve their yields for example, or improve the quality of their livestock...those are very important things.

And in Home Economics, too, is showing women how to properly take care of food, preserve it, any number of things. Probably now it's more on weight control too and some of those kinds of things than it was in the past. But a lot of things like that are really important to get out to the people and the Extension Service is the outfit that has that responsibility and has the know how to do it, to get it out.

And I'm sure you are aware that there are three divisions in the Land Grant Universities. You have the resident instruction, which is the students and that's what you think about when you think of the University of Oregon or Oregon State – the students – which is a very small amount of the total population served. There is a research component which does research on crops and all kinds of stuff and the Extension component which takes it out to the people. Somebody once said it's taking the knowledge from the college out to the people. And that's what our responsibility was getting the knowledge from the college in a way that could be understood by the people and that's where the specialists come in. They can

interpret the legal jargon, the scientific jargon, take the jargon that county agents, that the people can understand, because so much of that stuff is written in scientific terms and it's kind of hard to understand but the specialists can interpret that for us and that's where they have a very valuable role and they can keep track from other universities all over the country and world to know the best methods to use. And as county agents we can give them on to people in the area. So changes, I think at one time the county agent was the main source of a lot of those things. Now there are other organizations coming in and taking over some of those responsibilities.

[1:15:29]

I have a picture in the other room, on the wall in there, showing a county agent out measuring a calf's girth for a little boy who has a calf project, the little girl has her 4-H records, the Mom has some home economics questions to ask, and the farmer has an agricultural question to ask. And this county agent is out there in his grubby old clothes doing all these jobs for these individuals. It's a classic Norman Rockwell picture. I can show it to you here if you want to see it. It's one of my favorite pictures. That's what Extension was and I guess it cannot be that way today because of the many, many changes but that was the background of Extension - the individual's service to people. I always liked that and I always vowed that if Extension came to where we had to just sit back and be a middleman and not actually work with people, I'd just as soon find something else to do. Fortunately we had enough autonomy in our counties that we could continue doing that and I'm sure most of the old agents feel the same way.

**EU:** Maybe you've answered this question. What did you like best then, about working for the Extension Service?

**WS:** Well, the somewhat autonomy, you had some direction from the University and you had some things you had to do, but generally, you fit into the community and you did what the community felt was important and what you felt was important. Sometimes you had to lead people to help them see that this is important because there are some that probably wouldn't see that unless they were given some guidance. But one of the key points, and I mentioned this, was the demonstrations and actually going out on the farmer's land and putting in a different kind of a crop or a different species or variety of something to show how that would improve his yield or using a different kind of fertilizer would improve his yield. And when his neighbors saw how well he was doing, boy they adopted that. And that was the key to Extension – demonstration work. And education from that demonstration work. So, I think that's very important.

**EU:** When we were talking once, you talked about; I think you said the "esprit de corps?" Could you talk a little bit about that? The close relationships amongst the folks in the Extension Service?

**WS:** Every county was different. Coastal counties are different from the interior counties, the valley counties and Eastern Oregon. It took different kinds of individuals to work in those counties. In other words, an Eastern Oregon cowboy might have a difficult time working in the western Oregon or coastal county. But most of the guys were adaptable but you generally wanted to be in the area where you were most familiar and the counties were different but we also had autonomy, we could develop our own programs with our local advisory committees and we all just loved each other. More like an agape kind of love where we respected each other and liked to work together.

We had many activities together. We used to have out outings and stuff. We had a retirees outing just here a few weeks ago. But we used to get together occasionally as families and it was a family affair. The kids and moms or the spouses were not left out. When we had some kind of activity, the whole family was invited. So we got to know each other's families and a tremendous esprit de corps I felt and it goes on to this day and that's why we have the retiree's outings. It's going down in numbers because a lot of the old guys are dying off and some of the other ones are too busy with families and don't have time but we have a great time getting together and sharing.

One thing we do each year is to share what other members of our family are doing – that they may be ill, or they may be doing something else – we want to know how they are doing. Just like your own family. "How's Bill doing now?" And you want to know how they are. And so I think that esprit de corps is a good way to put it I think.

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

[1:19:52]

**Elizabeth Uhlig:** This is Part 4 of the oral history interview with Walt Schroeder.

When did you retire from the Extension Service?

**Walt Schroeder:** On February 28, 1983.

**EU:** 1983. So let's now then talk about some of your activities since you've been retired. So first, should we talk about the Legislature?

**WS:** If you insist.

**EU:** You were a member of the Oregon Legislature...

**WS:** Yes, ma'am.

**EU:** ... for how many years?

**WS:** For eight years. When I retired, I thought "oh boy, what a wonderful opportunity to do lots of things I've been wanting to do for years." Pretty soon there was a vacancy in the state legislature for this district and some of my friends said, "Hey, Walt, you're pretty well known in both counties. You worked in both Coos and Curry counties so why don't you consider running?" I said, "no way, I'm not interested in politics at all, except for my voting and being concerned about things like that, but not becoming generally involved." Finally, they kept putting the pressure on and putting the pressure on and I finally weakened and said, "OK." So we filed at the very last minute and almost didn't make it.

We had a campaign in 1984 and that's when the campaign was going on for the 1985 session. We hold biennial sessions here in Oregon and had three - four opponents on the Republican primary side and then there were several on the Democratic side but it only came down to one and it was a pretty hot campaign. We tried to have a good clean campaign and I think we did. But fortunately, or unfortunately, I won the election and so was sworn in January of 1985.

And we were asked what committees we would like to serve on and I said Ag, Forestry and Natural Resources and also Education and I think another one too, can't remember what the other one was but it was one that was of interest to me and so I was appointed to Education and Ag, Forestry and Natural Resources and served a full year under a very fine chairman who was a Democrat because the Democrats were in control at that time. He was a fellow who was a forester from Klamath Falls. And then again in 1987, I ran again against another opponent and won that election. Campaigning was not the most fun thing to do, but it was something that had to be done and I embroiled myself and the family and everybody else very much in that.

And, as Sally mentioned earlier, we got advisory committees. Whenever I got elected, I would set up advisory committees and the family relationships, or interests, fishing, agriculture, forestry, education committees going of local people that I thought were very up to date on some of those things. And met with them before the session because we had pre-printed bills that came out and asked them, "okay, look these over - which way do you think it would be the best for our county to go on those?" And then I corresponded with them regularly during the session, sent them out bills and let them know what was going on so we could get some input from them. The '87 session did the same thing. The '89 session did the same thing.

And in '87-89 I was appointed the vice-chair of the Ag Forestry and Natural Resources Committee and presided at a couple of the meetings when the chairman wasn't there. And then in 1991, the Republicans took control and I was appointed as Chairman of the Ag, Forestry and Natural Resources, also served in Education and Water Policy Committee which were all of interest to me. It was a satisfying program in some ways. We got a number of bills passed I thought were good. I mentioned one, the Forest Practices Act, was one that we got passed. I was one of the four major sponsors of that bill.

**EU:** That was in 1991?

**WS:** That was 1991, the Oregon Forest Practices Act of 1991 and it was considered to be the finest Forest Practices Act in the nation at that time. I'm not sure where it stands now. But we finally got that passed after some of the difficulties with Senate people.

**EU:** Did you work with the Governor on that?

**WS:** Yes, worked with Governor Kitzhaber on that. The Chairman of the Senate Ag Committee was a city boy, an attorney and he wanted to change it all around but we prevailed and the Governor put his thumb on him and said "get this thing straightened out." So the bill that we introduced was the one that was accepted and passed. It passed very handily through the Legislature.

**EU:** Just to check was Kitzhaber governor at the time or was he...?

**WS:** I think he was Governor at that time.

**EU:** Or was he the head of the Senate at that time?

**WS:** I think he was governor at that time. I'd have to look it up, I guess.

**SS:** He was the Senate President. It was the Senate President who told the Senator.

**WS:** Regardless, it was Kitzhaber who did it.

**SS:** He gets the credit for being a good guy in that instance.

**WS:** In that instance, yeah.

[1:25:42]

**EU:** Can you talk a little bit about that Oregon Forest Practices Act? Because in the '80s was when so much of the timber industry declined.

**WS:** Right. Well, it was designed to have sustained yields from the forests of Oregon and of course we don't have any control over the federal lands but we use very similar plans to what the federal had. And of course, law suits were filed almost every time there was a timber sale planned.

And so, we've had setbacks from the streams, different kinds of classes of streams, different kinds of setbacks. We had places where they would protect salmon habitat. We had an expert come in here who worked with us on developing that habitat protection and we felt that it was a very good bill and would protect forest lands, allowing them to be harvested to a degree and still protect our salmon habitat and our natural resource base.

Since then, of course, they have come up with the President's Northwest Forest Plan that's never been carried out properly and it never will. And it never will because of lawsuits every time somebody wants to do something. And they just keep throwing up salmon habitat - endangered species are going to be destroyed. There are probably more spotted, well not now because the barn owls come in and eat up the spotted owls, but for awhile there was more spotted owls than there were before living on second growth. So anyway, that was neither here nor there. But we had a number of other bills that we got through that I think were good for Oregon.

One was the statute of limitations on rape and murder, or rape primarily. And that one passed. I introduced that.

**SS:** Well, in your first session the Home School bill that was enacted. That changed a lot of restrictions against home schooling in Oregon. That was a very enlightening one for us.

**WS:** I have a whole list of bills that I sponsored that passed and a whole list that didn't pass. I didn't try to introduce more bills than anybody else; I just picked out ones that I thought were good for Oregon. Because if anybody else felt the same way when they introduced a bill, it was good for Oregon.

**EU:** Do you think when they first asked you, the Republican Party, or your friends, asked you to run as representative, that was largely due to your background in the Extension Service and your expertise in ...

**WS:** Apparently so, that's what they told me. You have the experience in working with groups and advisory committees and listening to people.

**SS:** And the farm, rural background. There were a lot of attorneys and a lot of teachers in the Legislature at that time. And still, I guess. And not very many agricultural people.

**WS:** The one bill I introduced was to recognize the Extension Service on its 75th Anniversary. We had a big day of that too.

**SS:** We did. It was a celebration at the capital.

**EU:** Some of your activities, then...I know you are interested in local history and you have written several books about local history here in Curry County.

**WS:** Well, Jack Ross, who was my supervisor, encouraged me to do some writing. And I hope he wasn't kidding because I took him at this word and I started writing. My first book was a genealogical history of our family and then I got involved in some other things that were just local, just our own family stuff. And then I decided to write a book about the Curry County Agriculture, *The People and the Land*. I used the old Extension Annual Reports; I was fortunate to have a set of the reports from the time Bob Knox was the first county agent here. And those first county reports were valuable because it named dates and things that happened and places and stuff as opposed to the present annual reports because they were able to develop plans on the sheep industry, goats, beef, dairy, lily industry, cranberry industry, forestry. You name it all the way down the line. A chapter for each division. And a lot of photographs I got from the Historical Society or from individual collections. And we had I think 300 copies printed and it sold out immediately and has never been reprinted, so it's out of print now.

[1:30:42]

After that, I started on one that took me several years to get done. No, just a couple years, I guess. *They Found Gold on the Beach*, it's a history of central Curry County and tells about the early Indian bands here and up to modern times with chapters on different segments of catastrophes, events, different things like that.

And then the more recent one, at the publisher right now, is called *Characters, Legends and Mysteries of Curry County* and it tells the characters, some of the people who were rather whimsical sometimes or odd and the legends of the people who helped develop Curry County and the mysteries are some things that have never been solved that we have always had some questions about them. I have one on trail rides, mostly a compilation of journals, and menus, and stories about some of our 4-H Trail Rides.

**EU:** Will you publish that one, too?

**WS:** I'm self publishing that because it has a lot of colored pictures and to have it published by a professional outfit would be a fortune. And there's no market, there's a very limited market – maybe 30 or 40 copies at the most. So I'm copying that myself.

I did one, too, for Sally's high school graduating class. They never had a yearbook, so I – this is just another one that's self-published; *Through the Years, Mitchell High School, 1945*.

**EU:** And that was back in Nebraska.

**WS:** That was in Nebraska, yes. And what it is is, people... one of her classmate's high school graduation picture, and then we all knew he graduated, and then pictures of his family now. And his brother and cousin and pictures of him now and so on. And then of course, we had a lot of old pictures that some of the kids sent to us. Pictures of the football team, their newspaper, plays, high school football programs, class pictures, class plays. Here's Sally, she was in a class play, "Happy Days." "Best Foot Forward," she was in that one. And candid shots and graduation day and then the class reunions, the class of '45, the 25th reunion up to the latest one, and the class will, class testaments, and those kinds of thing. So it was kinda fun thing to do. They had 45 kids in their class and they were the class of 1945. I feel like I'm more a part of their class than my own class anymore. I've been back to several reunions with her, they treated us like a class member.

**EU:** Were you active in the local Historical Society?

**WS:** I helped when it started.

**EU:** Okay, could you talk about that, then?

**WS:** Well, we had the History of Curry County class taught by a local lady who is a historian. As a result of that, I got together with some folks and we decided to rejuvenate an old historical society that had been here that had folded. And so we started the Curry County Historical Society. We had some county funding at that time. We had a little museum. A log cutting, ribbon cutting opening and a nice little museum going for many, many years. And finally, the group brought another building and called it the Curry Historical Society because there was no county funding. They didn't want to give that connotation that there was county money in it.

I served as President for seven or eight years, I guess, of the society and now I'm no longer on the board. I just sit aside and let somebody else do some of that. But I'm still very much involved. I do tours at the museum.

I do cemetery tours – we have a pioneer cemetery here. School kids from Toledo, Newport and Gold Beach come out to the cemetery and we have a cemetery search and they do headstone rubbings and that kind of stuff. It's kind of fun to do something like that. And then, just recently, we had the "Night of the Living Dead." We had a guy in a black cape ringing a bell whenever it was time to change groups, but we had 12 groups, I guess, of 8 people each who went from station to station to the cemetery headstone where that person that was buried was there in full life telling about their life. Oh, what a fascinating program! We had two evening sessions and one daytime session. We did that five years ago and it worked out very well, so we did it again. It was a little fundraiser. You had to pay \$10 a person to get into it.

[1:35:47]

I do a lot of stuff work the Historical Society taking people on tours of the museum. I am what they call a docent.

But history has been very important in my life. I've always been involved in history since I was ten and a half years old and I was at the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. My folks took my sister and me over there and there were 2000 of the old veterans up in their 90s still there. And to a ten year old kid! Oh man! That set me afire and I've been involved in history ever since.

And I was interested in Extension history, too. I have some of the early books on Extension history nationwide and so on. And then started to write history. And I've written articles for our historical quarterly we put out. And I get called on to give programs regularly at different parts of the county on different phases of the history of the area. I do a mini history, I also do one on mining and one on shipwrecks, one on the Rogue Indian Wars and so I have a lot of fun doing that.

**EU:** So you do a lot of volunteer work, then. Not just in history.

**WS:** I'm very much involved in Rotary; do a lot of volunteer work there. Either as committee chair or one of the workers.

I do a lot of trail building. Dr. Samuel Dickerson of the University of Oregon in the 1950s, suggested that we have a Cascade Trail, Skyline Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, have an Eastern Oregon Trail, we need to have a Coast Trail, so his proposal was to have a trail from the Columbia River to the California state line. It would be 360 miles, and a lot of it is along the beaches, but a lot of it is over the headlands and here in Curry County there are really short beaches, you can't get to them very easily so we had to build all new trail. We built probably 35 or 40 miles of trail in Curry County by having annual spring and fall work parties and we get anywhere from 10 to 25 volunteers come out on a Friday morning from nine until noon and on Saturday from nine until noon, in the spring and again in the fall. We just finished it up last weekend and I wasn't able to go because of my meeting but they finished up another short segment so it's digging trail, flagging it, putting the preliminary line in digging the trail and it's very well used by people down here. It's so convenient, you can just drive a few miles and you are on the Coast Trail. You probably saw some of the signs as you went down. It opens up some beautiful vistas. You think the highway has beautiful vistas but when you get on that trail, you are right on the bluff overlooking the ocean, it's just fantastic. And every segment is a little different from the other one. There's an Indian sands area, there are different areas that have different kinds of growth on them – timber and stuff.

And then we also do a lot of trail work in the back country. One of my favorite trails is up on the county line coming up this way into Curry County called the Brandy Peak Trail. Actually, it's called the Bear Camp Ridge Trail, but I call it the Brandy Peak Trail. It goes to the highest point in Curry County and we built a trail to the top of the highest peak in Curry County, 5,200 and some feet. And then we have in '71 we started with the 4-H clubs and individually, opening up old Forest Service Trails because at one time there were no roads back there; it was all trails like a spider web of trails all over. When I happened to get hold of a 1937 forest map that had all those old trails on it, we started opening up those old trails and the Forest Service had taken them off their system. We got them done and say hey, we're finished with them, back on the system it goes. Then the maintenance is a problem because the stuff grows so fast around here. But we got that going.

[1:39:52]

I'm involved in Gideons. I'm one of the clowns that put the Bibles in the motels and stuff and I hope they have one in your motel down there. They should have.

I was active in the watershed council. I spent 11 years as a charter member of the Lower Road Watershed Council – just retired from that. Give someone else a chance.

**EU:** Are you active in your church?

**WS:** Not as active as I should be. I was at one time; I was on church council and things like that.

Another group – we changed from Northwest Steelheaders to a group called Curry Anadromous Fishermen. Anadromous fish are steelhead, salmon and sturgeon. And we have a little hatchery across the river. I worked very much on that in the earlier days. It's the oldest hatchery in Oregon. Built in 1877 and recently revitalized.

I'm not as active as I was but I still get some things done. I don't know, I do a lot of things. Too many things.

**EU:** When I look out your window here at your house, it looks out over your garden. You have a wonderful view over the river valley, but you are a gardener and you taught Master Gardener classes? In addition to having your own garden?

**WS:** In addition to my own garden, yes. Sally razzes me all the time that we had a big garden when our boys were growing up and eating lots of food; we still have the same size garden, how come? I give a lot of it away to friends and neighbors and also we have a Rotary First Harvest Program where the first part of your crop goes to Christian Health or the Seventh Day Adventist Food Program and we give a lot to the Senior Center, so if we have surplus crops we give them away, so it's not wasted.

**EU:** What kinds of things do you have in your garden?

**WS:** Well, everything from soup to nuts just about.

**SS:** No soup and no nuts.

**WS:** We have an orchard of about 25 trees – apples, pears, plums. We have one cherry tree left. I cut down five recently. They just wouldn't produce any cherries. The birds were getting them all. Corn, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, beans, dry beans, blueberries, carrots, radishes, strawberries, marionberries, artichokes. That's probably about it and flowers. Sally takes care of the flowers up on this level and I take care of the flowers down below.

**SS:** That's my job, but I don't do it!

**EU:** You have taught Master Gardener classes? For the Extension Service?

**WS:** Yes, the Master Gardener program was just starting in the valley counties when I retired, but it got going down here after I retired, and so almost every year, I didn't do it this year for some reason or another. But every year I've done classes on pruning and grafting, small fruit production, garden layout and plans, varmint control; each year it's a little different

but I almost always do the pruning one. I did do a pruning class for the Brookings Garden Club. Bu tactually we talk about it first and then we actually go out and do it.

And last year was one of my finest thing, I think. We had a woman who was just widowed recently and she had a pretty good sized orchard that needed pruning so we used her place for the demonstration and we showed how to prune trees on about two or three of the trees. We had about 20 people say, okay folks, let's see what you learned and they went out and pruned the entire orchard for her. And she was so grateful, Elaine Pomerain, that we had done that and that's what it was all about I think.

And then I'm also serving on the 4-H Awards and Recognition Committee where they select winners of county medals and scholarships each year. And I spend a lot of time, unlike a couple of other agents I know, I spend too much time in the Extension Office, but I have a good relationship I think with them, and I hope I don't get in their way. But my neighboring agent up in Coos County was very active in Extension, when he retired, he dropped out of sight and nobody ever sees him or anything like that. Maybe I go too far the other way, but I think Extension is important enough to help whenever I can.

**EU:** This is the end of Part 4.

[1:44:45]

**EU:** This is Part 5 of the oral history interview with Walt Schroeder. Walt, do you want to talk a little bit about some of your other activities. Talking with school kids and hikes.

**WS:** Well, a number of years ago who was a 40 year 4-H leader by the name of Gladys Mann, started taking her 4-H Club out on wildflower hikes up the Illinois Trail which is a botanical paradise into the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area and pretty soon some of the adults, parents, asked if they could go along. And from then it grew like topsy and so every year the high school biology teacher, retired, who lives across the road here, and I take groups up the Illinois Trail and the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area and we get as many as 50 people which is too many on a hike like that and we go out and look – we call them Botany/History hikes and Fred covers the Botany and I cover the history portion of the Illinois Trail. A lot of history up there as well as on the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area. And Kalmiopsis is named for a rare plant, Kalmiopsis leachiana which was discovered in the 30s. It's one of a kind and so the whole area is name for that little plant. And then, later on, we formed two different groups here in the county, the hospital formed one called Sole Pursuits, which is a "get off the couch" program where people go out on short hikes, two, three and four miles. I've been involved in that from the very beginning and occasionally will lead one of the hikes or go on some of the hikes as a resource person. And then as a result those, some of the rest of us felt, hey, two to three miles isn't very much – let's get some tougher hikes so we can start a group called "Muscle Busters." We even go on overnights and do a lot of back country hiking and trail building. I had to get out of almost all of those this summer; I went to several of them before May, but after May my knee got to back I couldn't hardly walk any more so I missed some beautiful hikes this summer and I'm hoping to get back next summer to get back into it again.

I think Sally mentioned that I was involved in Civil War Reenacting. I'm not sure if you caught that or not.

**EU:** No, we didn't.

**WS:** But I was involved with a group called the 20th Maine which is a famous Civil War outfit that Lawrence Chamberlain was the commander of back Little Round Top and Gettysburg. And then we also have the first Oregon Volunteer Infantry which was the fellows that filled in for the regular military when they went back to fight the Civil War. And so we have re-enactment battles at Fort Stevens, at Willamette Mission, McIver up on the Columbia River, at Springfield we have another one and I've been involved in a number of those. I have the complete uniform and the accoutrements that go with it and then I had the privilege of going back to Gettysburg for the 135th anniversary of the battle and I may have been caught on that with my first experience in the Gettysburg Civil War was as a 10 ½ year old at the 75th anniversary. So I got to re-enact in that battle and it was an emotional experience. Especially at Pickett's Charge. When our regiment was third in line, the first regiment was decimated and they moved back, the next one moved up and they were decimated and they moved back and we moved up and the rebels kept coming at us and our guys kept dying and boy tears started flowing out of my eyes; I didn't want any of my buddies to see me tearing up. It was an emotional experience even realizing when they blew recall on the bugle everyone is going to jump up and say "Hi buddy – good job!



Good job, Reb! Then hug each other and then get in their nice van and go back to the motel and have a hot shower and a hot steak dinner. But it was a real emotion experience.

In talking to the other guys, they said they all had the same experience I did. They were just teary. Then I got to go to a place where her great grandfathers fought – Shilo and Chickamauga, Cold Harbor, and any number of other battles I went to and reenacted. What an experience. My feeling is that a good way to learn history is to read about. A much better way is to re-enact it. Because except for being killed or wounded, you are living that experience for the most part. You can play a hard core or everybody lives just as they did the Civil War. No air mattresses; one blanket per person, cook your own food, it may be hard tack or what they be farbeit – far be it from accurate. As you have an ice chest in the tent hidden away and you can get your cold drinks out of there and have an air mattress and that sort of stuff. It was a wonderful experience. I so much enjoyed that. I was the oldest guy in the outfit and just finally couldn't keep up with it. But I sure showed the young ones for awhile there. They saw this old guy come in and thought, "Oh boy, he's going to be trouble; we're going to have to carry him around." And afterwards they said boy, he kept us sweating. That was because of the hiking and stuff that I was able to keep up and keep ahead of them.

[1:50:18]

**EU:** And I think Sally mentioned when we were breaking you do a lot of speaking with the schools.

**WS:** Almost every year the Fifth Grade invites us in to give a talk about the Civil War and of course in a 45-minute period of time you can't cover an awful lot. We try to cover the high points and boil it down. She wears her hoop skirt that I bought at Chickamauga for her and I wear my uniform with the musket and the kids ask questions and it's an interesting experience.

**SS:** Well, it's while they are studying that period of our history, so the kids are pretty sharp. They are learning about it in school and they have somebody come in from the outside that looks real.

**WS:** We do it with the high school too. In fact at the high school, it's not meant to be one of the kids said, you know I learned more from your 45 minute talk than I did all week from our teacher.

**SS:** Too bad you're not giving the grade huh?

**EU:** Several times during our talk her Sally, you have participated.

**SS:** I did raise my hand once.

**EU:** No, no, that's fine. Do you want to talk a little bit about the role of the family in Walt's career and then I also want to talk about your own career.

**SS:** Well, my career has been the mother. The wife and mother mostly. But because we both had a background in Extension, experience and commitment, I think when we were married; it really has served us well. And our family has been a part of Walt's job. It hasn't been just a job. It has been a way of life and so all of our boys were in 4-H club work and they took part of all of the events. The camps and the fairs and the hikes. Quite often it's hard to keep kids enrolled in 4-H club work, especially if they are athletically inclined at all because they are so busy but he had a backpacking club, 4-H Outdoorsman Club that took our kids and their friends just about all the way through high school and that was something that Walt was involved in that he didn't mention because it was pretty much purely recreational for him was rafting the Rogue River. They were white water rafters and some summers it seemed that almost every weekend they were involved in something else. They were rafting the river. As a matter of fact, one of the fundraisers for one of Walt's runs for the Legislature was a raft trip where our three sons each rode a raft and Walt rode a raft and we had several couples who contributed to the campaign – that was what they got out of their contribution to the campaign. That was one of the fundraisers and really a fun one. It was fun for me especially, because we did a lot of camping when the boys were little and I was the one that did all the cooking, but on the raft trip, they did all the cooking, I was just a guest and it was fun.

[1:55:06]

**EU:** You had mentioned that maybe having a wife that knows about Extension Service and the work was an advantage in his career.

**SS:** It was an advantage to the family. We didn't have friction over all the night meetings or the times that he had to go to Corvallis for extended meetings, because we totally understood. That was just a part of our life.

**EU:** So you grew up in western Nebraska. And were you involved in 4-H as a girl?

**SS:** Not very much. But I majored in Home Ec at the University of Nebraska and my major was general home ec and Extension. There was a major that was Extension work and the summer between my junior and senior year was working in a county under a home Extension agent and doing 4-H club work and then it was against the rules, but I had a very strong willed home Extension agent in my home county and she insisted that I be her assistant or she wouldn't train anybody that summer, so I got to be in my home county for my training and it was one of the larger counties in the state so I got really good hands on experience that summer so that was what my major was an agent in Nebraska for three years before I came to Oregon.

**EU:** Where was that, what part of Nebraska?

**SS:** Morrill County, western Nebraska.

**WS:** Chimney Rock

**SS:** Yes, the county that Chimney Rock is in.

**EU:** So when you went to college, the Extension Service you knew was going to be a career for you?

**SS:** I did my last year.

**EU:** So what types of things did you do? You were the Home Ec agent?

**SS:** I was. In most Nebraska counties at that time there was one man and one woman and I did the Home Ec work for both adult and 4-H. And it was quite similar. When I came to Oregon they did a lot more things, I did a lot more things in Oregon than I had done in Nebraska because they had some different programs. They had a program, a contest at the state fair that was called the "Dollar Dinner Contest." Girls planned a meal.

**WS:** That was in Oregon.

**SS:** That was in Oregon. They had bread baking contests. We had demonstrations, now demonstrations across the country were typical. 4-H'ers did demonstrations and I think they did some contests but I never took part in the state fair in Nebraska. Our county was small and far from Lincoln, so we sent exhibitors and we had some outstanding – a girl usually went to the style review but we didn't have large numbers of youngsters that went to the state fair in various contests. And in Oregon, when I came we had Dollar Dinner contestants, bread baking contests, we had numerous demonstrations. Much bigger. And Walt didn't mention Summer School. That was one of the big programs. Before I came to Oregon the Summer School lasted for two weeks. Kids came from all over the state to Corvallis for two weeks. When I came they had cut it down to ten days; even that was pretty long.

**EU:** This was a summer school for 4-H Students?

**SS:** They came from all over the state onto the campus. The University of Oregon people complained that this is how Oregon State recruited so many of their potential students. That's because they lived in the sorority and fraternity houses and the dormitories. They had classes all morning every morning. They had activities in the afternoon. They had dances at night and the kids were how old?

**WS:** Twelve and up?

**SS:** Pretty young to go for that long. And then they had competitions every day in the Coliseum. Programs – they had evening programs that were put on by the bank, U.S. National Bank, put on a program – they had a talent show that kids

tried out for, it was one evening's program. It was a big event. And they had this saying, "If every 4-Her was just like me, what kind of a summer school would this summer school be?" That was one of the chants they made and they had several, oh, they really stirred up...

**WS:** "Is everybody happy?"

**SS:** We sang "ABSOLUTELY!" Everybody shouted out. If it wasn't loud enough, whoever was in charge, would say, "What was that?" "I didn't hear you."

**WS:** It was kind of corny in some respects but it was a real experience.

**SS:** And Walt and I taught even after we were married, they still let me come back to summer school and help teach classes at summer school and we taught classes in party planning and camp counseling and we led the singing at assembly at summer school which was broadcast over KOAC. It was a big thing.

[2:00:29]

**EU:** How did you come to Oregon? I mean, you were living in Nebraska. How did you get the job here in Oregon?

**SS:** Well, I was interested in going elsewhere. I had worked in the county neighboring to my home county, went home every weekend, so I didn't really have a life either place that was .... I was just feeling pretty adventurous I thought and one of the state 4-H staff members in Nebraska had come to Oregon after he had been in the service out here and then came back and was on the state 4-H staff in Nebraska and then he got an opportunity to come to Oregon to Clackamas County and when he realized there was going to be a vacancy in his county for a woman 4-H agent, why he wrote to a friend of mine with whom he had worked in Nebraska and asked if she was interested in coming to Oregon and she had just gotten her diamond ring at that time and so she wasn't interested in coming to Oregon but she knew that I was. We had talked about it at some meeting or other so she told me or told him, and so he wrote me about it and I applied for the job and got it.

It was kind of funny. This is a side diversion, but a little bit of an insight on Director Ballard. Director Ballard went back and forth often between Washington and Oregon by train in those days and the policy in Oregon was not to hire anyone without an interview. And so I couldn't come to Oregon for an interview for the job and even the state office in Oregon realized that and so Director Ballard decided that a trip he was making back to Washington he would be coming through Cheyenne on the train and if I could arrange to meet him in Cheyenne – I guess he had a layover in Cheyenne or something – I can't remember how exactly it was to work, and Cheyenne was about a hundred miles for me to drive which was not a big problem except that we here to be in 4-H camp that week and so I had it arranged when the call came from Mr. Ballard coming through Cheyenne, the Extension office was to call me at my parent's home and they were to run into – because our camp was held at the county fairgrounds. In western Nebraska we didn't have camp grounds, we had county fairgrounds – so they were to come in and deliver the message to me and I was to take off immediately to Cheyenne to meet Director Ballard sometime during camp week. And so I was waiting to hear from Mr. Ballard and the day he was supposed to call came and he didn't call and I thought, well, something had delayed him.

So, the next day the call didn't come. Finally, camp ended and the call had not come from Mr. Ballard, so I went back to Morrill County feeling, like well, I guess he decided it wasn't worth the effort to interview this little gal from Nebraska. Just a few days later, came the letter that he had foregone the interview and I was hired and so for months I didn't know what the reason was that hindered the interview but I think it was just before we were married when Joan Howell, who was on the state 4-H staff, said to me, "Would you like to know why Director Ballard never called you?" I said, "I've always wondered." And she said, "Well, when he got into Cheyenne the temperature was 102-103 degrees off the train and he was in an air conditioned car" and so it was a hot day in Cheyenne that kept me from my interview for the job. But I got the job anyway. So that was part of my fairy tale.

[2:04:59]

**EU:** So that was in Clackamas County.

**SS:** I went to Clackamas County where there were eight full-time agents; coming from a county where there were two full-time agents.

**EU:** And that was soon after you came there that you met Walt? Is that when you met Walt at the State Fair?

**SS:** Yes, I met Walt just a little over a week after I came to Oregon because I came just a couple, three days before the county fair and right after county fair, we packed up all the exhibits for State Fair and drove to Salem on Saturday night and were at the State Fair on Sunday. It was in the middle of the week, wasn't it when you came through.

**WS:** I don't remember.

**SS:** It was about two or three days into the State Fair. I was just beginning to feel like it wasn't a dream anymore. And then to meet Prince Charming! All of that in less than a week.

**WS:** It was the uniform that did it.

**SS:** It was just the whole thing. It was just so exciting and so thrilling. And you know, everybody was so nice. My old roommate came with me. We had been the last; there had been four of us in an apartment in Nebraska. My sister and Ellen and another gal and me. My sister and the other gal got married during the year prior to our coming out here. And I was restless and wanting to go elsewhere and my little roommate worked at the gas company. And she said, when she found out I was for sure coming to Oregon, she said I'm going with you, I'm not going to stay here by myself. So the two of us, and we had never been as far west as Yellowstone. And we trekked out.

**EU:** Did you drive out?

**SS:** In Nebraska we had to have our own car. In Oregon they drove state cars. But I had my own unpaid-for automobile. We packed it just as full as we could of everything that we thought we would need for a stay in Oregon. It took us five days to get here. We had a flat tire in Yellowstone Park and had to unpack all the shoes that my Dad had packed out of their boxes just to get them all in. Some guys came along and we were so embarrassed to have them have to unload all these shoes to get to the spare tire to change our tire for us. But anyway, it took us five days and we came down the Columbia River; we came through, we had a Conoco tour guide. You could get those from the gas companies. And this planned our route. We came out the northern route out of Yellowstone which is just beautiful and drove along the Madison River which is just a gorgeous river. But it took us five days. And when we came into Oregon, of course it was in eastern Oregon and no trees. And we drove, on the fifth day, we were both getting pretty tired of this trip and we drove for oh, 50 miles, without saying anything. And finally Ellen said, "Well, if this is Oregon, I'm going back to Nebraska!"

But we started coming into the trees and when we got to Hood River they were working on the new highway and so we had detour around Mt. Hood. So we went around Mt. Hood, way up to Brightwood and Government Camp down into Welches. Ellen got car sick. It was a beautiful trip. We just went round and round this gorgeous mountain, but she was sick. Got into Oregon City about 4:00 o'clock that afternoon and it was the night I went to the office and they were having a leaders' meeting before the fair. So I had after driving in this mountainous country that I had never driven in before, I had a meeting of the leaders' association before the fair to go to. But they had made arrangement with one of the Oregon City teachers, an English teacher named Miss Perry, for us to have a room there until we could find a place to live. So that was my first introduction into Oregon. I was just thrilled.

[2:10:09]

**EU:** So you and Walt got married the following year?

**SS:** We got married in April. We planned it first to get married in December and then we pushed it up to when? But then we ended up getting married in April because it was such a long drive from Coquille and Oregon City. Still is!

**WS:** Of course, I was young and foolish then.

**SS:** He was in the middle of building the 4-H building at the fairgrounds in Myrtle Point and so he was working every weekend on the 4-H building.

**EU:** So when you got married then, you moved down?

**SS:** I moved down to Coquille.

**EU:** And then?

**SS:** And then, from there, we were there for three or four years, then we went to Wisconsin for his masters' degree. He was eligible for sabbatical leave that year. They counted your service years and so it made seven years and after seven years you were eligible for sabbatical. Which is half-pay which was not bad at all.

**EU:** So you didn't continue working?

**SS:** No, I immediately started leading 4-H Clubs.

**EU:** Because you said you were also teaching in camps?

**SS:** I helped. Because of mutual recreation lab experiences, I did song leading and games and crafts and so I was always staff at camp, but not paid staff ever. But we did judge fairs together. We did quite a few fairs and that was fun.

**WS:** And that's how we got acquainted with Curry County, too. Coos County was just right next door so we were invited there to judge the county fair 4-H exhibits quite a bit.

**SS:** And you know, they were so nice to me when I first came on the staff in Oregon. I went to work in August. They gave me almost a week in advance of any vacation time I had earned to go home for Christmas. And then, I was hired with the understanding that I would serve my last year on the board at the recreation lab in Nebraska that I was on, so I got to do that and then I got married in April. So they really didn't realize a lot. I don't know what they expected of me, but I know it was a surprise to Bill Smith but I was scheduled for a soup making workshop at the time we were married and it was the specialist, Merle Scales was her name, that was teaching that workshop. I was allowed to take that workshop. I stayed with your folks I think and went from Coquille up to Corvallis and spend the week that we were there to do that soup making workshop.

**WS:** But they had quite a party for you when you left there, so you did something right.

**SS:** The 4-H staff in Oregon, Esther Taskerud and Winifred Gillin and Cal Monroe and Joan Howell – those were the four people on the state 4—H staff. And I thought they were just super people. Esther especially. She was the big should for all the home agents and all the young agents who had any problems of any kind. Connected with their job or not connected with their job. She was the kind of "Mother Superior" type. She helped a lot of young women with all kinds of problems. She was from South Dakota.

**WS:** And she's never been recognized as a 4-H Friend, either.

**SS:** She was just a super gal.

**WS:** I sent her nomination in though, for the 4-H Hall of Fame.

**EU:** So it seems that even though you weren't formally working for the Extension Service, you were working for them.

**SS:** Working for the Extension Service. My part was in it. I think that was probably the biggest part about most of us. Our hearts were in it. It wasn't just a job and there were enough young agents, young single agents, because Walt and I were some of the first to get married I think. And there was a group of us that would get together then, oh more than once during the year we would get together for a camping weekend and our favorite place to go was over on the Metolius. And there would be, oh, 15 or 20 agents would come together for a weekend. We hiked and cooked and sat around and visited. There was just wonderful camaraderie. We sang around the camp fire. We did all the things that the kids do. Because we were not much more than kids.

**WS:** We called the group the happy wanders.

**EU:** Is there anything else we should be talking about?

**WS:** Oh, we could talk for hours.

**EU:** Thank you both very much.

**WS:** You are very welcome and thank you for overtime. Boy, you just gave us more time than you deserve.

[2:17:01]