



## Gilbert Shibley Oral History Interview, November 10, 2015

### **Title**

“Extension Agent and Family Forester”

### **Date**

November 10, 2015

### **Location**

Shibley residence, Estacada, Oregon.

### **Summary**

In the interview, Shibley details his family's deep Oregon roots, commenting on their homesteading in the Estacada area and his own upbringing on the family property. From there, he describes his family's early connections to Oregon State University, and then outlines his personal academic progression beginning with high school and running through his undergraduate studies in Biology at Lewis and Clark College, and his graduate work at the University of Oregon.

Next, Shibley describes his move to Wisconsin and his ten years on faculty at Lawrence University. He then recalls his move back to Oregon and his involvement with 4-H Extension.

A major theme of the interview is Shibley's involvement in family forestry and the outcomes of his study in the Extension Service's Master Woodland Manager program. In this, he describes the nature of the program, the evolution of family forestry during his lifetime, and his involvement in political activities with the Oregon Small Woodlands Association and the Clackamas County Farm Forestry Association. He likewise discusses his work on taxation of family forestry operations, his own management of the family property, and his collaborations with professional foresters in developing forest management plans.

The interview concludes with notes on family and thoughts on the continuing value of Extension in Oregon.

### **Interviewee**

Gilbert Shibley

### **Interviewer**

Mike Dicianna

### **Website**

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

## Transcript

**Mike Dicianna:** OK, today is Thursday, November 12th, 2015, and we have the pleasure of capturing the story of Gilbert Shibley.

**Gilbert Shibley:** Shibley.

**MD:** Shibley. He is one of the OSU Extension, he's an emeritus, longtime resident of Clackamas County. We are at his home here in Estacada, Oregon. My name is Mike Dicianna, I'm an oral historian for the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project.

We'll start with a brief biographical sketch. One thing we always like to do is learn about our subjects, like when and where you were born and some early family life and childhood experiences.

**GS:** OK. Well, I was born in Estacada. I believe it was in my mother's grandma's house; anyway, it was a family location with a doctor nearby. And then I grew up on the farm that I now manage – I manage part of it. Grew up in a family of six kids. My parents were married in 1926 and I was born in 1938, sort of in the middle of the bunch of kids.

I started learning about farming by following my dad around, and I started learning about reading by listening to mom read stories to all the kids. I went to four grades out of the eight that were in the local school, a mile and a half that we walked to, in Springwater. And that's the name of the pioneer community where this property is. Then they closed that school – consolidation efforts throughout the county meant that they thought they could do better education or more efficiently or whatever, in bigger schools. So we had to close this school and I started going to Estacada School, and that's where I graduated from high school in 1956.

So I was learning about life and biology and farming all at once. And I played with my sister, who is a year and a half younger, in the woods a hundred yards west of our house. That was our kindergarten. We had unsupervised play within shouting distance of the house, and we were comfortable and the parents were comfortable. So that's the first education I got. [laughs]

**MD:** I understand that your family has been in Oregon for over 150 years. What's the story of that family and that pioneer story?

**GS:** OK, well, yes. It dates back to 1863, when both my dad's grandpas brought their families across the Oregon Trail. The Shibleys from northeastern Missouri, and the Marrs – my dad's mother's family – from Fayetteville, Arkansas. And they weren't on the same train, but somehow they knew about each other eventually. And the Shibleys first settled for a year or two near Silverton, and then further up into the mountains from here in what's called the Ellwood District. Shortly after that though – I think it was less than two years over there – one crop season, they came here and bought some land from the Marrs and homesteaded in a couple of different units by 1900. And so they both had similar experience in hill/forest/farm combination in those locations.

And the Shibleys had had the same kind of geography to farm in in Pennsylvania before Missouri, in New York before Pennsylvania, in Switzerland before that. My great grandad's great grandad Shibley came from Switzerland with his brother at age 22 in 1817 – no, 1717. Is that right? 1739, got it. 1739. Anyway, I visited the place in Switzerland just to see what it was like, and it looks a lot like this. [laughs] So that's one thing that goes with land management – you learn from your parents on the property, so you learn what fits that property, that climate and geography.

[0:05:45]

**MD:** And a lot of the people from northern Europe came here because it was a lot like where they came from – back east as well as their homeland.

**GS:** And the farmers those days were ninety-five percent of the population, or something like that. They farmed subsistence farming; they farmed enough to feed and house themselves and a little bit left over, if they were lucky, to sell or trade. The property that is still in the Shibley family, was put together from parts of homesteading purchases and some of that was purchases from the in-laws. And that made one property that my dad learned to farm in the early twentieth

century. He was born in '98. He was learning on the farm from his dad and granddad, they were both still living here. And that's where his education started, but he went through ninth grade at the local school – the same one that I went through later.

Life was hard on the trail. My dad's dad walked a lot of the way from the Mississippi/Missouri junction, because he was six years old. But my dad's mother, on a different wagon train, was only one or two, so she got to ride the whole way. [laughs] So we don't have very many detailed stories about the Oregon Trail, but we are pleased to know that that's part of our background.

**MD:** I also understand that your exposure to Oregon State University – Oregon Agricultural College and Oregon State College back then – has really early family roots. Not even though you're not an actual OSU alum, the family has ties Corvallis.

**GS:** Right, that's right.

**MD:** Fill us in a little bit about how OSU has affected your upbringing.

**GS:** Well, we'll start with the important part: I'm a Beaver fan because my two older brothers studied Ag and graduated with Ag degrees at Oregon State College in the '50s, and that's when I started paying attention to sports. I didn't realize it at the time, but my dad had actually studied at Oregon Agricultural College when he was in his late teens, or he may have even been twenty, I guess. Anyway, because it was during World War I, he signed up to learn military and farming both, on campus there. And when we would visit there to see my brothers, he would point out where he remembered marching in parade drill kind of stuff. So what he studied was military half the time and the other half the time Ag, but it only lasted a brief time because the war ended before he really got started in that program. And then he needed to come home to help his dad farm, so he had a very brief college education.

So my brothers – both two older brothers – graduated in Agriculture and that's where I paid most attention to OSU. But by then I already knew a lot about OSU through the Extension Service, because I became a 4-H member as soon as I could, at age 9. My brothers had been in 4-H and FFA ahead of me, and I could watch what they were doing. And my mother and dad were both 4-H leaders. So we learned about the way Extension wanted it to work: you get the kids hooked and then you have the adults ready to learn through Extension also. So my mother was a part of the OSU – well, by the time she quit being, when she died, she was a part of the OSU Extension Study Group in Springwater here, that part of Clackamas County.

[0:10:58]

But my dad had participated with Extension as a learner and a contributor. One time I found a reference to his work using goats to control blackberries in an Extension publication that was devoted to the topic, and he was one of the main examples. This was before chemicals were available for killing weeds.

**MD:** I understand that he was even on KOAC radio during the war.

**GS:** That's right. He was a very good cooperater with John Inskeep, who was the Extension Ag agent for Clackamas County. And through that, Bill Smith, the Ag radio man from Corvallis, came up with his wire recorder and interviewed my dad and probably Jon Inskeep at the same time. And what they were, I believe, probably talking about was the results of early success in planting grass seed as a new crop for this area. My dad was the first one to grow that – Chewing's fescue, grass seed for lawns and golf courses – starting in the '30s. And so I think that that might have been what they were talking about.

**MD:** We may have the records of that in our archives, I'll look for it for you.

**GS:** But anyway, they talked about a lot of things. I remember the two of them around as they looked at the fields that were no longer being plowed every year, and my dad was quite pleased with that result of growing grass seed, a perennial, so that he didn't have to do annual plowing.

**MD:** By horse.

**GS:** By horse.

**MD:** Getting into your upbringing, how about your high school days? So you went to Estacada High School?

**GS:** Yeah, and I took the standard curriculum there, but I enjoyed and Ag/Shop program and FFA. So I was in both FFA and 4-H at the same time, briefly, but I only exhibited at the fair through 4-H. So I enjoyed the sciences especially, and when it was time to think about going to college, I chose to go to Lewis & Clark College, because I had an uncle – well, for a lot of reasons – but I had an uncle who was a chemistry professor there. He was married to my mother's sister, his name was William Shearer. And my two older brothers had actually started at Lewis & Clark College before they transferred to Oregon State, for just a year or two.

And we knew that at institution – it's only thirty miles from here – it was good for them to get started, because then they could also still come home and help with the farm some on weekends. And it was a good liberal education to start with, and then they added the more practical Ag emphasis when they got to Corvallis.

**MD:** Now you specialized in biology and got a degree in biology at Lewis & Clark, how was the program in, at that time, probably a rather small college?

**GS:** Yeah, I think there were about 1,100 or 1,200 students then. I found it very exciting – well actually, I started to major in Chemistry, and then I took a field biology class from a very enthusiastic teacher the last term of my sophomore year. And he was adding meat to the bones that I had gotten from learning natural history on the property, following my mom around on Mother's Day flower walks for example. I had learned some of the right names for things.

[0:15:19]

Anyway, I just got hooked on biology and so I shifted my major to Biology and did a little bit of undergraduate research – very little, because there wasn't a very good program or facilities for that. But it continues to do a lot of that. It's one of the small liberal arts colleges that is really doing a lot – no graduate program in Biology, only in Education and Law – they do a lot of good education helping people learn research by doing it. I wish I'd had more of that opportunity. But it was a very good background for me, and my major professor there, he told me, "you know, there's a really good guy doing research on the kind of topic that you're interested in at the University of Oregon. You ought to go down and talk to him," and [phone rings] then I ended up applying there. I'm just going to let that ring.

And so that was a pleasant experience and I chose to go ahead and do a master's and Ph.D. research at the same time, because I wanted to follow that model of being a college teacher.

**MD:** I noticed that your dissertation, which I began to read, is heavily marine biology-based – crabs, and coloration and things like that. Were you thinking about being a marine biologist out on the ocean?

**GS:** Well, no. I was focusing on that because my undergraduate professor had said "that's the best way to learn biology, you have to learn about all the weird creatures that live in the sea. Different from all the ones that we know that are walking on land." And I got very interested in that. Partly we had done that as a family vacation thing, studying the tide pools, so I felt very at home with that.

No, I chose the crab to work on because that was something that people in the department where I was, the Biology department at University of Oregon, exposed me to some research angles that would merge two of my interests – the nerve system and the endocrine system. I know that they're merged in humans and other vertebrates; I found that that had very much of an analogous situation in the eyestalk of our commercial crab, the Dungeness crab. And because it was out there, I could do some microsurgery and find out which part was doing what. That's the nutshell version of it.

Anyway, I got hooked on that. And yes, I got my Ph.D. from doing that. Then I did one year of post-doctoral research in Madison, Wisconsin at the University of Wisconsin, with a different kind of aquatic animal – the hydra – because that's in-land. And there, the simple way I say it is, I was studying brainwaves of brainless animals, because the coelenterates are among the simplest moving animals, and I was curious. And a fellow there on the faculty, that I got to use his lab, he coached me in techniques that he had been using of actually recording the electrical signals from moving hydra; a little pond creature that is no bigger than a pencil lead. So then I learned that and then I did more of that kind of research. I

did that in my lab for my undergraduate student at Lawrence University, where I had ten years of teaching. After I left Madison, I just went upstate a ways and was part of a Biology faculty at Lawrence University.

**MD:** Let's move into that. You were teaching at Lawrence University in the early part of the '60s through about 1970?

**GS:** Yeah, 1975.

**MD:** Kind of an interesting time in the United States with the Vietnam War, protests, and the counter-culture. What was it like teaching those kids?

[0:20:01]

**GS:** Well, we had our sit-ins in the administration building and so on. I would say I learned a lot from working with students in those days. I had responsibilities teaching biology but also in the General Education program requirements, called Freshman Studies, where people from all departments read a few books during a ten week term, talked about them, and then I was grading term papers on literature and on writing about biography or other kinds of topics. So I was learning to grow up to be a citizen in this turmoil of the '60s, with the help of students who were willing to ask tough questions as we read these books. And then I ended up being the administrator of that program in the last couple years that I was at Lawrence.

Then it just became clear that Oregon was calling us back. And so I gave up a tenured position in that department to come back, hoping to find something like it here in Oregon. Because we had family and farm responsibilities, I knew I needed to help a little bit – not so much in physical work but in planning for the future of the property. So that's when we made a big change. And after one year of working on the property, I got a half-time job as, lo and behold, a 4-H Extension Agent, with a focus on natural history and camp. So I was a camp director and organizer of 4-H Forestry Clubs, like I had been a member of when I was a kid; Geology Clubs, which my mom had recently become a leader in – in her old age, she decided she wanted to learn science and the one that suited her best was geology, because she liked to pick up rocks.

Anyway, I quickly got a half-time job doing that, and guess what? The guy that hired me into that position had been my County Agent when I was in the senior level of 4-H in Clackamas County.

**MD:** I've run into this before; OSU and Extension is one big family.

**GS:** Right. Anyway, he knew that I was prepared to do, for a lot of reasons, what needed to be done. Then, the guy that was the full-time 4-H Extension Agent decided to go into research in his study of spiders and mites for the Oregon Department of Ag, and that opened up a full-time position, which I applied for and took. And then I worked for twelve years, I think, as a 4-H Extension Agent, first in Multnomah County, about half that time, and then in Columbia County, the next county downriver on the Columbia.

**MD:** You were living where at that time?

**GS:** We were living in Portland. We didn't move from Portland, because my wife had a job in the Portland area and we had purchased a house there while our kids were in school. The other reason we left Wisconsin was we didn't want our children to take root in the Midwest when all of our family connections were back here.

I did get into education, but not in a classroom. In 4-H – the job of being a 4-H Agent is like being county school superintendent, without having any schools or teachers on the payroll. You just have the volunteer 4-H leaders that need help learning how to do the club structure and how to get the subject matter that they need to help the kids do their projects.

**MD:** So you were administering that over the entire county.

**GS:** That's right. I was one of two people doing that in Multnomah County, and one of one-and-a-half doing it in Columbia County.

**MD:** And that lasted clear up until the late '80s.

**GS:** Late '80s. And by then I had been starting to learn a lot of forestry by going to Extension workshops in Clackamas County. Well actually, one in Washington County also, because I was living closer to that.

**MD:** So actually, we can shift gears into forestry because you're heavily involved, and you actually became a Master Woodland Manager through an Extension program in Clackamas County. Tell us about that program, what that does for a person?

[0:25:06]

**GS:** It's an intensive course for, let's see, I think it's eighty-five hours of class time we put in – some of that's in the field – over the course of nine months, and then we'd get qualified. A homework project for that was to develop our own forest management plan for our property. So I did that and we had experts from the campus come up along with the county people to help us work through that process. I got acquainted with people that I've since worked with in the Clackamas County chapter of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association. So I started really getting involved – going to meetings, learning – and by 1991 I was doing a lot of work out here, because I had quit being a 4-H Agent. I needed to resign from that because it was sort of my turn to take care of the home property. My brother was disabled, my father was deceased, my mom couldn't do it by herself, the other family were scattered, so I chose to come and work on the family property.

And I soon learned that I needed more forestry. Actually, I used the County Extension Forester for guiding me, walking on the property, and thinking about management possibilities. I also explored hiring a consulting forester to get more depth on some of that planning, but I chose not to do it because I was learning so much so fast from Extension. I said, "I'll wait and use the pros later," which now I do. I used a consulting forester for helping me manage – well, I manage 440 acres farm and forest, ¼ farm and ¾ forest, with my sister and myself, two different ownerships.

**MD:** The Forestry program, through Extension, has got real deep roots in Clackamas County, going back into the early 1970s.

**GS:** Right, even the '60s, in helping people get started with Christmas trees as a crop. That's not really forestry but Douglas Fir was our main Christmas tree – now it's Noble Fir – just the same species as our main timber crop in the forest. So I learned a lot by working with Extension, but the first – I planted some Christmas trees as early as 1981 and I was managing this while I still had a full-time 4-H job. And the Clackamas County Extension help lead in Christmas trees and forestry at that time was a man whose specialty was poultry – Clayton Wills. So he helped get the industry started in Clackamas County, and now Clackamas County – and Estacada in particular – is the like the Christmas tree growing capital of the world. Because nobody does it more than the U.S., nobody does it more than Oregon, nobody does it more than Clackamas County.

**MD:** This whole idea of forest management for private land owners, as opposed to the thousands of Weyerhaeuser acres, people have had to manage their properties for centuries but as a practice it seems to have just developed over the past few decades.

**GS:** Right. But let me tell you the history of it that I know about. In the late '40s – I'm not sure the exact date – there was a program from the Forest Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, and OSU Extension, they had cooperated in having farm foresters. And they did a pilot study – Clackamas County was one of those – and the job of the farm forester was to go and get acquainted with people who were farmers and who had significant opportunities on their property.

[0:29:56]

And Al Parker was the one who came and visited our property with my dad. And I remember following along where he looked at the trees that were now getting to be ten to twenty feet tall, that I remember was the very place where our family would go find Christmas trees when they were six to seven feet tall, that nobody planted. They just seeded in naturally on some of the land my dad had purchased from neighbors downstream. It was a forty-acre parcel that had clear creek running through it on the bottom. But on the ridge, right next to the farm, the young Doug Fir were growing thick and I remember he said to my dad, "well, it would help if you thin out a few of them." My dad could never get enthused about cutting little trees, so they kind of thinned themselves.

But that was the beginning of farm forests with Extension and they eventually converted into the OSU College of Forestry having a trained forester as an Extension Forestry Agent, along with an Ag Agent and a 4-H Agent and others in each county. Now they only had it for forestry in the counties with a lot of forestland, so it didn't fit in Wheeler County for example. [laughs] Anyway, so I got acquainted right away when we had that kind of an agent here. Dan Green was the one that was the trained forester that took over from Clayton Wills who had been doing forestry but wasn't a forester. And then eventually Mike Bondi took that from Dan Green. Dan Green stayed as a private consultant in the county, and Mike Bondi built up a program that was a booming program.

He told me to consider the Master Woodland Manager Program, and I thought, "gee, that's great – I'll get more in-depth than I've been able to get already," and so I did that, graduating in '93 from that program. So then I was certified as a Master Woodland Manager, meaning I could be trusted by OSU to go and help my neighbors learn forestry that Mike Bondi or the professionals didn't have time to go visit everybody and their little problem with weeds or whatever. So it was a good thing for me because I had just finished that and – it's not like a master's degree, but it's a master of a narrow topic in woodland management.

So OSU Extension Forestry had a project to help educate the public about forestry. And one of the programs – they got a grant to do low power radio broadcasts from busy highways, leading people through Oregon's forests. And Mike Bondi, the Extension Forester for Clackamas County, got picked to do his work, half-time, to organize that program for a few years. He said, "Gilbert, I can't do all I've been doing, so would you consider working for me half-time to fill in?" So the grant paid me to do some of his work, which meant getting out on a lot of people's property, helping them, plus teaching classes. I taught a lot of classes in basic forestry management. So that was the heyday for me of learning forestry from when I first started the Master Woodland training until about fifteen years later, when I finally retired from part-time work that I kept doing off and on, helping as an Extension Forestry Assistant.

**MD:** But you never let it go, you're still...

**GS:** Yeah, that's right. My career is still the same – I'm still doing that kind of teaching with my neighbors and other involvement in the organizations that help private people do forestry here. Small, we call it "family-sized" forest ownership. So I'm still doing that, still learning to do my own better, because I'm continuing to learn by teaching others. And so I've been heavily involved in that, so that's my main focus.

[0:35:00]

I spent some time late in my 4-H staff time, kind of becoming a philosopher of education on a sabbatical, and I realized what Extension clients do on the farm and in the forests, in the home, in 4-H, is always learning by experience. "Learn by doing" is the 4-H motto. So I learned all the way along, preparing for what I'm doing now.

**MD:** A lifetime of learning.

**GS:** That's right. And when you talk about lifetime learning, you don't always think about the non-academic part of it, but I do. I think about the practical part more than the reading I do.

**MD:** I know that you're still deeply involved with the issues around family forests, so what are some of the burning issues for people like you that have 200 or 300 acres of property with forestland on it? As opposed to a giant Weyerhaeuser with lobbyists and things like that; who speaks for you?

**GS:** Well, the Oregon Small Woodlands Association has chapters in many forest counties – I don't know the number in Oregon, it's probably less than half the counties. But that organization stands up for me in Salem when the legislature is in session; it's really why it was formed. And it was formed – our chapter is called the Clackamas County Farm Forestry Association – so that farm forestry, remember I mentioned the farm forester? Well that's kind of the focus that got this organization started. We're the only chapter that's kept our old name because we pre-existed the Oregon association.

But first – before I get to the lobbying kind of angle of influencing public decisions – I first got need for a deep learning about taxes; that's one of the issues we face. At first, taxes were not friendly to farm forestry, because the bigger the trees got the more they were worth, and therefore the more incentive you had to cut them before they were really through being a forest. So the tax policy changed and I had to learn about that. But the main thing was, as soon as I started being active

in this, my parents were doing some estate planning – they realized that they had some possible estate tax consequences of the value of the land and the timber – so I learned a lot of that.

Then, when my mother died in 1995, I really had to learn it because we had to be careful that we didn't cut most of our good timber to pay the estate tax. So I found out one way within the tax law to avoid that and worked through with the lawyers and a forester and our tax people, how to avoid paying too much estate tax. Now the value that is exempt is high enough that our size property doesn't have to worry about it. But a lot of family forest landowners do. So I ended up being a specialist – teaching classes in Clackamas County – more of a specialist than the Extension people on this particular angle of estate tax planning for foresters. So then I helped a lot of individuals and I included that among the basic classes that I taught. So that's one thing – taxes is one thread.

Regulation is another. The public good that we provide on our forest land includes wildlife habitat. This week, there's still a lot of good looking big bucks on my property here. They don't belong to me, but I give permission to people to go on my land to hunt them. Clear Creek is a good fish stream: salmon run up this far, coho and winter steelhead. The water and the fish, you have to use my land to get to it, but it's a public property. So that intermix of public benefit on private land, that takes some watching from the part of us small peanuts farmers so that the regulations to protect the environment don't get out of hand.

[0:39:57]

At one point, I figured out if the rules of how much forestland you have to set aside next to a stream to keep fairly natural stream conditions, if they went as far on my land as they said they should on the federal land or the state land, it would change from fifteen percent of my property being dedicated to stream protection to fifty percent. That made me pay attention. It turns out that the good forest management is possible next to our streams, even after a recent decision by the Oregon Board of Forestry to kind of tighten up, to try to keep more forest to protect the fish.

So through my involvement with Oregon Small Woodlands, I became very active in that, and I would teach people how to do that. I would say, "basic forest management means managing your land and trying to manage the state as they try to manage us." [laughs] So that's where Oregon Small Woodlands came in.

Now this recent business with the Board of Forestry decision, I was really keenly aware of an involved in. I put in oral and written testimony about four or five times in the last six months, so that the Oregon Board of Forestry new lots about Oregon Small Woodland's opinion on it and, in some cases, just my particular angle, because I had a lot of input. Using my professional biology, I was able to participate in the fish side of planning as well as the forest side of planning. That was for the joint federal and state planning for salmon recovery from endangered species listing on the lower Columbia distributaries on the Oregon side. So the federal people were interested in the Washington side; in Oregon, we just focused on this. And there were different parts of the state who had different teams of stakeholders doing that planning. Anyway, so I got deeply involved in protecting the public's resource and my resource at the same time.

**MD:** That's one of things that, being a biologist, you can see both sides. You can see the financial end of it that you've had to deal with, but you also know what the biologists are trying to do at least.

**GS:** Right. And, like my dad, I had always tried to figure out the best way based on our own experience with our own land. But I depended a lot more on the professionals in forestry for learning my forest management. I couldn't learn by experience all of that, I had to learn what the pros knew from a lot of good research at OSU. Well, it's the same way with the fish. I could at least follow the language – I was not a fish biologist – but I studied the way they make their living in fresh water and how their kidneys are like ours and so on. So anyway, I knew a lot, so I could represent – I was the Oregon Small Woodlands Association representative on that stakeholder team for several years of meetings about every two or three or months. While that management plan [phone rings] on the Oregon federal rules – or, not rules, that plan is just voluntary, not like our Oregon Forest Practice Rules, which are rules that I have to follow. Anyway, so I could see a lot. So I've used my professional biology background in a lot of ways to help not just my own management but, I think, state-wide management.

**MD:** On your property that you're dealing with, timber-wise, is it a managed cutting over a period of time?



**GS:** Yeah, it's a hard challenge because most of us started growing around 1940 or around 1955, because that's when two big logging events happened on the land before I got involved in the management. So it was growing up after my parents purchased that land in the '40s and '50s, then it spent a lot of time growing up. Parts of it my dad could log, or have loggers work on. But the part that is my duty, starting in the mid-'90s – so now for twenty years, I've been trying to juggle getting stuff spread out, so we have more different ages, so that they're not all wanting to be harvested at the same time. So that's the big challenge.

[0:45:28]

But luckily we have enough acreage that we can do a little here and a little there, some them being cut a little earlier that I would like, and I aim for about a seventy-year rotation, because you can get a very productive forest going on that kind of a basis. So I had to start cutting some when it was fifty and then some when it's ninety years old. So I've been trying to gradually space out on the two different family ownerships where I'm the forester; I use that same strategy to figure out where to cut when and make the best use of what's given us. The planting was all done by nature, just seeding in from seed trees, until the mid-'70s. On the federal lands, they started planting in the late-'50s and '60s. Otherwise, forests in Oregon have been mostly self-planted.

**MD:** Now it's required that you replant.

**GS:** That's right. So now, as soon as we clear cut – for Douglas Fir we clear cut mostly, but sometimes we can thin an area and then wait a while and then clear cut that later. But yes, if we leave a full-scale forest after we have thinned, then we don't have to plant. And that phrase "full-fledged forest after we thin," that applies to the streamside buffers – the outer part of those streamside buffers. We can cut the first twenty feet, anything, we have to let it fall in the creek and that's good for the fish. So it's all a juggle to try to get – I just study what I've got growing and figure out where to cut. And if we do a clear cut then we plant it immediately; it has to be growing within the first two years and then it has to be free to grow – it has to be above the competition by deer or weeds – within six years. And so that's a good rule and we don't have any trouble following that, because that's to our benefit as well as the public.

**MD:** It's a renewal thing. One of the things I've always wondered about is, when you contract with, like, Estacada Lumber or a firm that comes in and does the cutting, and then that timber is sold to a mill...

**GS:** There are several different ways of doing it, but most family-sized owners like myself – which would be from five to 5,000 acres are sort of the small woodland category, and I'm sort of the middle of that with, we have just under 500. What I do is I hire a consultant forester, a professionally trained forester, who hangs out his shingle and says, "I'm here to help you with your problems," just like a dentist or a doctor hangs out their shingle. "I'm here to help you with your health problems." What I need help on is keeping track of the markets and what different mills are taking and how much they're paying. So when I need to harvest, which is a little bit every year, then I have that consultant forester walk with me. We agree on which part it would be a priority place to work this year, then we do it usually mostly in the dry weather, because you don't destroy the soil by compacting it than if you do too much in the wet weather. So I have one guy that I've been working with for over ten years now, and I chose him because he's young, to match the age of my kids that will take over doing it when I'm not doing it anymore.

So that's the way we work. I don't use him for very much other planning. Well yes – I also paid him to do a full-scale forest management plan for each of the two properties that I manage. We get government subsidies, cost-share, to help do that planning, because they know that if they're going to have government support to operations, it needs to be based on good planning. But I had already done a management plan, so we worked together to do an updated management plan. And he can do the cruising. He can measure the number of board feet out there – I can guess by looking – but he can measure it more accurately and we can plan on that basis.

[0:50:40]

So that's what we use a professional for: find out exactly what you've got and then set up a strategy to manage to reach your goals. And once that's done, then I only need his time during the time, briefly, of the planning of the year's harvest. He then scouts around for the best fit of a logger to what we need doing – the size of the unit, how steep it is, what kind of trees they are and so on. He sets up the contract then I have that contract separately with the logger. And then the logger

charges by the thousand board feet harvested for us. We make the logs and we sell them to the mill. The forester makes that connection; the forester not only finds the best fit to our situation for use to us, but also for the mill to buy. In fact, our average number of mills buying since he's been doing this for me, each year, for a single two- to five-acre patch that we log, usually it's at least five mills. Five different buyers. Because he knows what they want and how to maximize return, and by doing that, he earns me back more than the seven percent that I pay him.

**MD:** Is he a Beaver?

**GS:** Yes he is.

**MD:** Good. [laughs]

**GS:** Yeah, he graduated from the Oregon State College of Forestry, and he worked a little bit with other firms to get experience, and now he's on his own as a Lone Ranger. And he has clients all over western Oregon and some in Washington.

**MD:** Did they put in temporary roads to get to timber?

**GS:** Yeah, sometimes we have to do that. On this particular property, we never did engineer a road and say, "this is where it ought to be." We chose from among many leftover skid roads, which is where the big bulldozer drag logs to a mill or to a landing. And we chose the ones where we needed to have them, and then we upgraded them with widening and rock, so that they can handle log truck heavy traffic. So this last year, we did some bulldozer work on roads, but it was basically upgrading patches of our pre-existing road. And then once we get a road out into the forest close to where the trees are, then we don't really build a road for trucks. The ground-based logging equipment – skidders, yarders, loaders, whatever – they can get it to a landing where we do get the trucks. And dry weather sometimes, and if it's wet at all, we add rock to that spot.

I actually probably spend at least a third of my forest management time on roads, planning and maintaining. Meaning cutting the brush back, making sure the water isn't eroding the road, keeping the water where it ought to be relative to the ditch along the side of the road. So that's a big part, and I taught people about that when I was teaching the basic forestry. I one time wrote an article for our county newsletter, for the Clackamas County Farm Forestry Association – I wrote several – but one was about the estate tax learning I did. Another was, "I like these rainy days, folks." I'm at home in the wet woods of Oregon. The wet woods of Oregon, where my roads run, is where I need to be when it's raining, because then I can tell where the water wants to run and then I can help it with the least amount of effort on my part. So I encourage hands-on learning. Unfortunately, my body's not doing as much with a shovel, so I've learned to rent small excavators when I need to.

[0:55:03]

**MD:** You do publish quite a bit, aside from your academic publishing. I noticed that there's a number of articles and writings and things about family forests.

**GS:** That's right, about managing family forests, that's where my attention has gone since I got so heavily involved in it. And I find that I have stories to tell to help other people work their way through the same problems that I've faced.

**MD:** One of the things that we always like to do is, we're getting the life story, but we also want to learn about the family. I'm sure that you have kids that you're really proud of, so tell us about your wife – how you guys met – kids, and things like that.

**GS:** My wife and I met at Lewis & Clark College. She was the step-daughter of a lumber mill grader in Klamath Falls, but we actually met in religion classes – took some of those and she majored in that. Her name is Barbara, and Barbara and I have four children and seven grandchildren. I am the fourth generation of people on this land. My grandchildren, therefore, would be the sixth, and I'm aiming for the seventh – we don't have any great-grandchildren yet.

This is a preface to your question, this is my philosophizing about my family: the Iroquois have a saying about, "you should plan for the seventh generation." It's a long-term view of natural resource management. So this is tribe in New

York who learned an important lesson a long time ago. I translated it slightly in my direction. I don't think they might have even started saying "plan for the seventh generation ahead of you." I say, what makes sense – I'm the fourth generation, that's the middle of seven. These days, you can reasonably expect to meet your great grandparent or great grandchild, and introduce them to the land. I learned from the land and the grandparents and the great grandparents and parents. I pass on about the land to my children, my grandchildren and my great grandchildren. That's my goal. I have grandchildren in their late twenties, so I may get there.

Unfortunately, none of those grandchildren have chosen a forestry career yet, but there's still hope along that front. But they're all doing well in important work in the world and for their families. So that's the broad context. But so, for example, our oldest son, who has worked with me on the property in spare time over the last few months a little bit, and quite a bit over the summer – Jeremy is a math teacher in his last five years before retiring, at a high school in the North Clackamas School District, right here in Clackamas County. He and his wife live in Portland, he has a strong interest but no time to help out here, except in the summertime. So this summer, his goal was to shadow me and the forester as we planned harvest. Well, we ended up planning it too early and even cutting it before he got out of school. Because of the dry weather spring, we took advantage of it and left him out. So instead, he helped me with the paperwork part of planning, and we're revising our management plan halfway through a ten-year management plan. So he's interested and involved, and he may retire soon and help me a little bit more out here when he's retired.

A nephew of mine who just retired within the last year, whose mother is my co-manager of the largest part of this family property, and who owns, himself and with his brothers, 100 acres, he's now helping me a little bit, learning some of the tricks that I know about managing water on the road. Yesterday, and resting his back today. [laughs]

[1:00:14]

**MD:** This weekend might be an issue.

**GS:** That's right. So we're ready, we think, for this weekend. So that's the oldest son. And then the oldest grandson that we have – his oldest son – has a master's from Portland State in Electrical and Computer Engineering, and right away got a really good job doing research like that at MIT, earning probably more than his dad is in his late teaching career. And then their daughter, my oldest granddaughter, is worth telling a story about, but I don't have time. She started doing ballet when she was nine or ten, she liked it so well she graduated from high school a year early so she could accept an apprenticeship with the Oregon Ballet Company in Portland. She did that and danced with them for several years, and now she's in her third year with the San Francisco Ballet Company, which is a world-class achievement. Anyway, so we're real proud of Grace Shibley.

Then our next oldest son is a Master Woodland Manager. He got that while already being on the faculty at Southern Oregon University in Sociology. He lives on five acres of farm and orchard next to the Siskiyou National Forest. And so he took the Master Woodland Manager class in that drier climate down there. But he did his homework assignment on the five acres right below the house here. He had planted it in the middle of his college career, and now it needed managing. So he did the plan for how to manage it. That was a great combination. We know he's interested; he may someday be able to retire and come closer.

In the meantime, his two sons have spent more time probably in the woods than most of the other grandkids – even though they live in Ashland, they come up a lot in the summertime – and they're both interested in science. One is a senior, one is a sophomore; busier with sports than with anything else right now. Although the youngest, Ian, is probably at least as interested in debate as he is in soccer and basketball. So he may help OSWA sometime in influencing the legislature or whoever. Anyway, so all of them are very good students; all of them are near straight-A students. So we're just as pleased as anything.

Next oldest son lives here, five miles away, and he has two daughters. He is a landscape architect and he works with both small private yards and public projects and various things like that. And his two daughters, one has just finished a bachelor's degree at U of O majoring in Philosophy, minoring in Anthropology, and is looking for work. [laughs] And then the youngest one is a junior in high school. They're all really good students...and that's our purpose in life!

And then our daughter has one daughter, and she and her husband run a trophy business in inner northeast Portland on MLK. And Zoe, our youngest granddaughter, is enjoying science. We brought many people from her school for over a five-year period, setting up family camping on our property, using the creek and the canyon for hiking, including her science class. We had a supplemental outdoor school for her seventh grade science class, because sixth grade outdoor school wasn't long enough. Their science teacher hooked up with my daughter who is on the PTA board there. We brought them out on a school bus and we spent a full day introducing them to this property and the resources it has. And she is toying with – running is her sport, she's in cross country, track last spring and cross country this fall.

[1:05:40]

So they're all just doing well. So we have a lot of hope for good in the world, if not on this land. [laughs]

**MD:** That's the thing. Keep their interests, they know their history, they know their lineage.

**GS:** That's right. And they all have followed what the Oregon Small Woodlands and OSU expert on estate planning, Clint Benz, who started the Ties to the Land Program, where family foresters could learn about passing it on in a family. We have done, with all of these people that I've just named, get a love for the land first. Management will come.

**MD:** That's a good philosophy. So other than hiking around on your land, do you have any other interests? Hunting, fishing, hobbies?

**GS:** I enjoy my work on the land so much, I don't really need another hobby. I don't hunt or fish, I did when I was a kid. But I do invite in particular people to do that and say yes to most fishermen, but I can't say yes to all the hunters that want to come. But I'm saying it more because there's such a good population of deer on our land this fall.

I do a lot of photography. I used photography skills some in my research when I was working in physiology laboratories, and then a lot on just sight-seeing with the family. I really enjoy tinkering with my old machines, so I would say one of my favorite hobbies is keeping my 1951 John Deere tractor alive and working for me. Things were simpler in those days; I can't do much to keep my new computer-run engine in the newest car we have, which is also a hybrid. It runs on electricity that it generates as well as on gasoline. So I don't tinker with that, but I do change oil. I have handfuls, plural, I have more than five small engines – lawnmowers, chainsaws, various other kinds of equipment.

**MD:** For the farm.

**GS:** Yeah. And while you're talking and looking at me, I'm looking at our land and thinking of what I can do next that's fun as well as that needs to be done. And one of the ways that I do that, since I have an operated shoulder that's still partly healed and so on, and my knee doesn't work right – for three days last week, I rented the smallest excavator I could from the local rental shop and use it helping burn slash piles and helping ditch roads and moving logs out of one place into another. And my wife said, "yeah, I know you like those toys." I said, "no, it's not a toy, it's a tool that does very well what needs to be done."

**MD:** But it's fun.

**GS:** That's right. [laughs]

**MD:** One of the things that we always like to end with is giving our narrators to impart that last bit of wisdom to the people that are going to be watching this and visiting the site. Is there something that you would like to leave with the Beaver Nation for prosperity?

**GS:** Right. Well, look for help wherever you can find what's going to suit you best for your goals, and I look to Extension. Also, keep learning from your own experience. I just read lately a sentence that my mother wrote for a community history book that was published after my father died, and it said, "Everett," my dad, "was always searching for a better way to do something," and that means you have to keep learning from your own experience and from other people. And Extension is a perfect combination, as a resource, for that kind of learning. So if you do that kind of thing with vigor, you're going to make money enough to keep it in the family, and eventually the money will be part of what keeps it in the family, but the love of the property, and the loyalty to the legacy of previous generations and the future for upcoming generations is

what's going to really matter to keep a family-sized family forest operation going. So there are a lot of challenges but it's very satisfying.

**MD:** Well, on behalf of the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project as well as the centennial of the Clackamas County Extension, I want to thank you for your story. It's now a permanent part of OSU history.

**GS:** Good.

[1:11:41]