



Jean Starker Roth Oral History Interviews, November 13, 2007

Title

“Lasting Legacies”

Date

November 13, 2007

Location

Starker Roth residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

Summary

Interview 4 begins with Starker Roth's memories of her and her family's immediate response to the death of Kermit Roth, including Jean's dual obligations to continue planning her daughter's wedding and to assume full control over Kermit's former business interests. From there she describes her increasing involvement in various real estate investments, as well as her support for a number of community initiatives, especially at Good Samaritan Hospital. She likewise notes the creation and endowment of Kermit E. Roth Gateway Park in Corvallis.

Starker Roths' philanthropic efforts are the primary emphasis of this session, and over the course of the interview she touches upon her association with and support for OSU Extension, the OSU College of Health and Human Sciences, and the Osborn Aquatic Center. She also reflects on her work with the E. E. Wilson Foundation, the Benton County Museum, and the OSU Foundation, as well as her love of OSU's sports teams.

The interview ends with a lengthy discussion of the life paths followed by Jean's children, social and political issues that have been particularly important to Jean, and her sense of gratitude for having lived a full and active life.

Interviewee

Jean Starker Roth

Interviewer

Maia Fischler

Website

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

Transcript

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

Maia Fischler: This is Maia Fischler. I'm in the home of Jean Starker Roth and today is November 13, 2007. Today Jean and I are going to be talking about some of the community activities she's been involved with, and I'd also like to ask her some questions on a more philosophical side of things, asking her to reflect a little bit about her life and some of the things that she's accomplished. When we left off last time, you had just told me about Kermit's passing. At that time, your children were grown, almost everybody was out of the house and in college...

Jean Starker Roth: Except for Kim. She was in the sorority house, Sigma Kappa. Then when her dad died, she moved home to be with me. She was engaged to be married in June of that year, and he died in February. She said she'd come home and stay with me, so I got to know my future son-in-law well during that period. But it was a very tough time to be enthusiastic about a wedding – you know, because Kermit wasn't going to be with us.

MF: Did you have other friends in that era who were a comfort to you, who took you through that difficult time?

JSR: Well not really. Well I shouldn't say that, there were a couple of couples who really stood by me. But it's amazing, in that era, and I think it's true today, when you're no longer a couple, it's a different story. I had one lady tell me very bluntly, "Well I won't be inviting you to dinners anymore, it makes an uneven number." You know, people see things differently. But Maisie Howland of the CH2M Howlands – she and Jim were wonderful support. And now, I'm kind of supporting them, because Jim has a disease that he will not recover from, so I try to take her out to lunch and do things with her.

And you know the thing of it is, I think that people don't realize when you're in your 50s what it's going to be like when you're alone in your 80s. People are much more aware of that now than they used to be. People were more self-centered, I think. And then the other thing that I think about my life is that Kermit and I did everything together. We weren't big on going places with other couples. We went with our family. We went fishing, he went hunting with the boys, and I did my little things with the hospital and that sort of thing. But basically we did our social things just together.

MF: Yes, you had a really special bond, and that's really hard to recreate or to substitute. So what kind of things did you do to move you through the mourning stage?

JSR: Well I planned the wedding, and that was a full time job. And of course when a person dies there's so much to take care of. And as I've mentioned before I had very little money that was coming in routinely. I had to figure out how I was going to support myself, if I was going to go back to work or what I was going to do. Because we had a lot of assets, but we didn't have any cash flow. And so I hired a man to manage the forest lands that were left over from the mill. And as I've said before, I trusted him implicitly, but I really didn't feel like I had a handle on it because I didn't know anything about timberland and managing it. He did a lot of work on – I don't know what they call that – he drew pictures of the forest and what we should log and what we should do with different sections of it – I wish I could put that better. Anyway, that went on for a couple of years, and when I needed some money I'd say, "You've got to log." But after I got my wits about me and got kind of settled down, I thought, you know, I know a lot about real estate and how that works, so I think I'll do a 1031 just like my father did. And so the timber manager surveyed the land I wanted to sell first, to see how much I could get for that, and I found a building I could buy, and we exchanged those two, and that worked out so well that I did it four more times. Because then I had the money coming in from the rents, so I knew how much I had to spend. And that worked out very well, and still to this day I own those properties.

MF: You said the BiMart property was one of those?

JSR: Well the BiMart property was a little different, because I had inherited that from my mother's estate. It had a 30-year lease on it that was just peanuts, because it was such an old lease. Why my father did that I do not know, but there wasn't much income from that. Not like it is today.

MF: Is that still your property today?

JSR: Yes, I own that corner there, 9th and Circle, and now that I have a decent lease, it gives me some income.

MF: So you got involved in your real estate business, and was that the time that you started getting involved in community activities as well?

JSR: Yes. I'd always been interested in the hospital, cause my dad was one of the movers and shakers when the hospital was in bankruptcy down here on Harrison Street. He and a group of other men pulled that hospital out, got it going again. My husband was interested in the hospital and served on the board of the hospital when they moved from Harrison out to the hill. And so I was always involved in the auxiliary. And my mother and Mrs. Ed Woodcock were the two ladies who started it. They held a tea and asked women to come, and that's how the auxiliary started at the present hospital. So we were always involved as a family, more or less, in the hospital. And of course when Kermit died, they made me an honorary trustee of the trustee board. And so I've been very active in that and helped raise money for the various projects that they've had. Like the Pastega House. I was co-chair of the heart center with Mario Pastega, and I also supported him when they wanted to do The House, and so he and I worked together real closely on that.

MF: Fundraising, for the most part?

JSR: Yes.

MF: And were you also involved in the cancer center there at the hospital?

JSR: Yes, and a hallway out there is named for Kermit. That was one of the first fundraising projects that I had. Because I knew a lot of people in town, you know, and I kind of knew who to ask.

MF: You have a long list of projects you've been involved with, and I could ask you about each one individually, but you could also tell me, to direct me a little bit, which ones you feel are your major points of pride.

JSR: Well of course the park. And that was interesting, how that came about. Ike Guilder built this house. And when we were through building it, he came to me and asked me if I would loan him some money. He owned the corner where the park is, and he had plans drawn up, he was going to build a big high-rise something or other there, a big office building. And I said "No, Ike, I don't think that's what ought to be on that corner. The chamber is next door, you're going to hide the chamber of commerce building, and as people come over the bridge, they won't see where the chamber is." I said, "I don't think that ought to be built on that corner." Well he picked up on that and within two or three weeks, it was very short period of time, there was a consensus between the university and the city and the chamber, and they all pitched in and bought that property from Ike. And they came to me and asked if I would landscape it.

And that's how Kermit's name is on that park. So it all worked out just fine, everybody was happy and I still look after it. I get after them when they don't keep the park up because I have also donated funds to the Benton Country Foundation for the purpose of keeping that park up. They're supposed to use it to put in some perennials and that sort of thing. And now I'm after the chamber because their trees have grown up so much that you can't see their building, and I think they ought to take those trees down so that when people come over the bridge, they can see where the chamber is. So I'm working on that.

Now let's see... the other thing is that I belong to the Home Economics Club, and my interest in that was from long long ago. Azalea Sager was the lady in charge of the home economics part of the state Extension Service. She and I had known each other, because I'd grown up in Corvallis and they lived not far from us. Well when I was teaching school up the McKenzie, she called me one day to ask if I wanted a job in Lane County doing work with people who wanted to process their produce – either canning or freezing or whatever. I said "Oh I'd love a job for the summer," and she said, "Fine." So then about halfway through the summer, she called me and said, "We have an opening in Astoria for a war food assistant." This was during the war.

MF: Yes, you did tell me about that.

JSR: So that's how I got into the Extension Service. Because Clatsop County liked what we did up there with the women. You see Extension Service is funded by federal, state, and county funds, and so the county was going to go ahead and do their part to fund the Extension Service in that county. It's still going. But I started that whole program up there.

MF: And then you became a trustee?

JSR: I was what was called a home demonstration agent --- otherwise known as a home demon.

MF: And then eventually you became the chair of the college of home economics development council?

JSR: Yes, that was when Kinsey Green was dean, and I was chairman of the advisory committee for probably six or seven years. Then, when Tammy Graves became the dean, she asked me to continue. However, we don't have a chairman as such, we just have the advisory committee.

MF: What are some of the projects you did through that committee?

JSR: Well, we raised money for the college. And we talk about where the college is going, what needs to be done, what needs to be processed -- whatever we think people ought to be thinking about. When Tammy Graves took over that deanship, it was combined with the College of Physical Education, I think it was, and they called it Health and Human Science. And so she came to me and wanted to know about the history of the home economics side of that. And we had the other group and we formed them together, so now we do both.

MF: Is that the group that started the Bates Family Study Center? What does the Bates Center do?

JSR: It's mostly studies of child development --they have a nursery school there -- and also gerontology. So it's expanded a lot since we started, there's lots of research that goes on there. I think the bone density study is probably in the basement of the women's study center, I don't think it's over at the Bates center, but it's all intertwined, all of that research.

MF: So the Bates Center is an actual building?

JSR: Yes, and I was on the committee that helped fund that. We raised quite a bit of money for that. Among the committee members was the lady who was the original Betty Crocker [Mercedes Bates]. She was a graduate of Oregon State. Anyway, she came out here and worked with us to get it going and took a big interest in it. And of course she left us a big sum of money, she was the major donor of that building. Well she didn't much like staying downtown at the hotel, so she used to come and stay with me. And I so enjoyed being with her because we had an awfully good time when she stayed with me, I would take her around to where she wanted to go. At that time I drove a lot better than I drive now. So I provided transportation for her.

MF: Was she older than you?

JSR: Oh yes, she's been gone many years now. She began to go downhill during the time she gave the money to the Family Study Center. And then the last time she came out, she really wasn't herself. She came with a gentleman who was kind of a consultant with her money, and he kind of took over caring for her too. But she stayed with me and he stayed downtown. Mercedes Bates, that was her name.

MF: So you were also involved in the 4-H foundation at the state level?

JSR: Yes. Because -- I think we talked about this -- when I was growing up, I had the daughter of Harry Seymour, the head of the state 4-H, for my 4-H leader So I was always active in 4-H, and when my children came along, why they were active in 4-H. Both of the girls were state winners in the dress competition. I taught them some, but they had a great leader, Mrs. Wells was her name, who lived out on the corner of Walnut and 29th. Boy she was a great leader, she knew a lot about sewing, and I thought it was better for the girls to get it from somebody else rather than me. So they went out there a lot. And then my dad was one of the movers and shakers, along with Burton Hutton. He came to my dad and wanted to buy this property in Salem that was for sale, and it was timberland. So my dad went over there, and the idea was to build a camp for 4-Hers. Well it was a pretty big project, and my dad was very involved in that. So then when it came along, I was treasurer or some officer in the 4-H program that was established to run that camp. Eventually we had to sell off half of the timberland, which just killed me cause it should have been self-sustaining. You know people don't realize that timber is a renewable resource and you just harvest it every 40 years instead of every year like a lot of crops. So if we'd been able to save that land, we could have had it rotating so we'd always have some income, but it didn't work out. Now, we've got a really wonderful fundraiser, Randy is his name, but he's great, and he is applying for grants. And now

they're just doing really well, they're able to keep it up and it looks great. So I was involved in that as being on the 4-H board. I became very interested in that, because I wanted to see it go. And my dad provided money for the swimming pool at that camp, and then Kermit and I gave some money for the upkeep of it.

MF: You've given quite a few swimming-related gifts. Is there a particular reason you have that interest?

JSR: Well we always thought that swimming was very important for Oregonians because we have so much water. And when we'd see people drown because they hadn't learned to swim, we thought that was just terrible. So we've always supported water-related activities. And I still do that, because through the Benton County Foundation, I support for instance lifts for people to get in and out of pools. And then I think we already talked about the girls going to camp Whispering Winds -- they didn't want to go back because there wasn't any swimming pool. So Kermit and I talked it over and we'd made some money in the stock market, so we gave some stock to them so they could build that swimming pool. But we wouldn't let anybody know we'd done that because we didn't want the kids to go to camp and have everybody say "You're special because your mother gave to the swimming pool." So it's never been named or anything cause we didn't want the kids to know.

MF: Did your family always have a swimming pool when your kids were growing up?

JSR: Yes, Kermit and I always had a swimming pool. Of course when I was growing up, we didn't have a swimming pool. My dad supported the 4-H one, but he didn't support it for the family. But we did have a pond out in the woods that we could use in the summertime.

Did I tell you about Kermit building that swimming pool? When we built our house over on Jackson Street, we didn't have a swimming pool. He came home one day and said "What would you think if we build a swimming pool on our property across the way? I could bring in 12x12 timbers and put them together in the corners, and then we could put butcher paper down for the paint job and then put plastic around it, and it would be four-feet deep. And I said, "I think that would be great," because the kids were little and they could have a lot of fun. It was just like a big puddle pool. So we did that and I think that lasted for probably five or six years. Every year, we'd tear it down and re-butcher-paper it and plastic it, and it would last the summer. Then we decided we would build a real swimming pool. So we did that. But it wasn't covered, and that wasn't very satisfactory in Oregon. So when Kermit closed the mill, he came to me and said "I've got to take the metal off the roof of some of the machinery that are in the mill. If we cleaned it up and cut off the end where the logs have hit it, I could bring that metal in and we could have a building over the pool." And I said, "No thank you. I don't want a metal building in my yard." And he said, "Well now just wait a minute, I'll tell you about how we're going to do this." So anyway, the back part of it was all metal, and then we put boards -- it was a very nice awning -- over the front of it. It was all wood, and we had sliding glass doors so from the street you couldn't tell what it was. And it's still there!

MF: So it covered over the whole pool?

JSR: Yes. And we built a sink and a bathroom out there, and boys' and girls' changing rooms, it was really a nice little thing. And of course we entertained all the kids, the Campfire Girls, the Boy Scouts, the 4-H kids, whoever came around. This was wonderful because the kids were at our house and we knew what they were doing, it was just a wonderful pool for the kids when they were growing up.

MF: That leads me to my questions about Kermit's community involvement. It sounds like he was also involved in the Scouts.

JSR: Yes, with the Scouts in Eugene. I don't know what level, but he used to go down to meetings for the Boy Scouts and was very active. He did a lot of fundraising for the Boy Scouts. He always said that he didn't like to ask people for money, but because of his relationship with the mill, there were lots of time when he had partial lots of something that he couldn't really sell. And they were very usable, so he would donate those. He liked in-kind giving. He got canoes for the Boy Scouts, he would ask various people who manufactured things if he thought the Scouts could use something, and that worked out very well. In fact I still do that a lot with my fundraising. We try to get in-kind gifts. Because people don't mind giving things that they've manufactured. Those canoes were perfectly good, but maybe they had a chip out of the paint, they couldn't sell them but they were perfectly usable. In-kind giving was his thing.

MF: He was also involved with the Rotary?

JSR: Yes, he was and after he died, I made him a fellow with the Rotary Club.

MF: Were there any things he was particularly involved with?

JSR: I don't remember that there were things he was particularly involved in with the Rotary, but maybe he was more involved than I realize. He was very involved with the church -- he was a trustee of the church. But he wasn't a joiner, really. He didn't like to join very much.

MF: So he did his work in the background?

JSR: Yes.

MF: Another thing I have on the list of your credits is the EE Wilson Foundation. What's been your involvement there?

JSR: Well I was on that for a number of years, and Fred Zoeller was head of that, and managed it from the very beginning when EE Wilson died. I knew EE Wilson, and I guess they thought I would be interested in managing what he had given to the college. Pete Smith lived next door to us over on Jackson, and he was on the board, so he got me involved and I was on that for a number of years.

MF: Did that involve managing the lands?

JSR: No, the money in the bank that was accumulating interest and so forth. The duty of the board was to have kids apply for money from that, and we had to read their applications and decide who was going to get what. Boy that was a long time ago when I served on that.

MF: So what are the most recent things that you've been involved in?

JSR: I serve on an advisory committee for Home Ec -- Health and Human Science-- and the library, and the hospital, as an honorary trustee, and the Benton County Museum. Just recently I've quit the museum and I've quit the library, so I'm down to just the hospital and Health and Human Science. It gets to be just too much.

MF: But it's an incredible gift to the community. You were talking about how, when you'd have a good year in the stocks, you'd give to this cause or another. Do you think that's still going on at the same level in this day and age, that same sense of philanthropy that people in your era had?

JSR: No, I don't think so. I think everything now is based on what I can do to get rid of the money for tax purposes. I really think that people give to get their tax off. And I've always believed that I would like to give money to something when I know where it's going, rather than to taxes. So I try to give as much as I can and not have to pay tax on it.

MF: It seems like your choice of beneficiaries has a lot to do with your personal interests. And you're involved not only in giving money but also in giving expertise and advice.

JSR: That's right, because I want to know what they're doing with the money that I give them.

MF: I think that makes you different than some other donors too.

JSR: Uh huh, probably. A lot of people give money and then it's done, they don't pay attention. But I really like to know what they're doing with it.

MF: One big organization you've given to is OSU. I'd love to hear more about your involvement there, all the things you've contributed. I know a lot of it has been real estate and fundraising for various real estate ventures.

JSR: Well, you know a lot of this stuff that goes on is who you know. I'm really proud of the fact that there were three ships, fishing vessels, available in Newport. I had become very good friends with Bruce Mate, and his wife Mary Lou, and his mother. They wanted me to go on a trip, and his mother needed a roommate, so I said I would go and room with

her. Well we just got along fine, and we became really good friends over in Newport. So anyway, the more I heard about what Bruce Mate was doing, I was very impressed with the science that he's promoted with whales. So anyway, when the fishing industry over there kind of went caput, there were three men who wanted to donate their boats to OSU for research. Well the trustees, who are the people who say yes or no, they didn't know diddly doo about Bruce Mate, hadn't heard of him, didn't know anything about him. Well I had followed him because he's on BBC and he's on the History Channel, all of those things. He was doing great things with tagging whales so they knew where they were going and what they were doing. John Irving was one of the men who was trying to get the OSU board to accept these ships, because he thought it would be a great thing to retrofit them, get them fixed for research. He called me one day to ask if I'd be willing to speak to the trustees about Bruce Mate. And I said, "Oh, I'd love to," because I really think he does a good job. Anyway, I asked them, "How many of you know the name Bruce Mate?" [pause indicating no response.] So I proceeded to tell them who he was, what he had done and what research he was doing. Then they were all skitterish about insurance on these boats, but they finally worked it out and they accepted the three boats. So far they've only done one, but they're available. And I'm really proud of the fact that I kind of encouraged them to do that. So sometimes it's just who you know.

MF: So you've done a lot of work through the OSU Foundation?

JSR: Well I'm on the OSU Foundation -- I wouldn't say I do much work.

MF: Besides the boats, are there things at OSU that you look at and think, "I'm so glad to have been a contributor to this."?

JSR: Well the library of course, I think our library is one of the nicest ones in the northwest. And I'm very supportive of Karyle Butcher, I think she does some very innovative things. The most recent thing she's done is having that babysitting area that she has. Students, if they're studying in the library, can bring their children and let them off at this little care center. They're given this thing like they give you in restaurants, a beeper, so if they need them they can beep the mother -- or father as the case may be these days. And I think that's quite innovative. It's quite a nice project. They've done some interesting things with the plumbing because of course they needed a toilet, but they have a really nice little porta-potty, so they didn't have to put in actual plumbing. I think it's very well designed, and they have students who are in there learning childcare. I think it's a great project.

MF: And you're such a Beaver fan.

JSR: Oh yes, I'm a Beaver. You know since I've lived in Corvallis all my life, and I've had three out of my four children go through Oregon State, and my husband was a graduate of Oregon State, and I've worked for the college through the Extension Service, we've just been involved in the university all our lives. And of course my father worked at the university, and you're just kind of -- that's where your life has been.

MF: I love the fact that you still go to the football games.

JSR: Oh yes. That football game Saturday night was something! But oh, the officiating was just terrible. And even Mike Parker who calls the games for the radio, said it was the worst officiating he'd ever seen in his life. And the paper -- I think Riley asked them to downplay it, but boy was he upset. It was a feisty game.

MF: And you still go to those with your family?

JSR: Yes, in fact I did go with my daughter and son-in-law this time. Sometimes I use tickets for guests. I like to entertain that way. I have the tickets, I might as well use them for something.

MF: Your support for OSU sports seems like a particular pleasure for you.

JSR: Yes, but I really like basketball better. I go to all the basketball games. They're not doing very well on basketball this year, but when Ralph Miller was there, it was just wonderful.

MF: Are there any other projects that you'd like to talk about? Things that you're particularly proud of?

JSR: Well I guess I'm particularly proud of my kids!

MF: I'd love to get back to that. We talked about their younger life when I was here a couple of weeks ago, but I'd like to hear about them today and what you're most proud of with each of them.

JSR: Well Ken is the oldest, and he lives in Southern California. He has two sons, and the grandchildren are doing well. Derek is his older son. He's married to Mindy and they have three children now. She's a Montessori school teacher and has a school in their home. And Derek is very handy -- he's made a dollhouse and he's made slides. They have half their yard for the school and half the yard for their own private use. The kids know when they come that they don't go on that side of the yard. They just do a whale of a job, they're growing up to be such fine young people. And I'm very proud of them.

My Ken -- I don't know what Ken does. He's on the California Water Board, he's done something with that. He's also done something with hazardous waste, he's been on committees about that.

MF: Is he an engineer?

JSR: No he isn't, he was a business major. He started out being a forestry major, but every time he went on a field trip, he got poison oak so he had to give that up. So he was a business major, I don't know what specialty he was in, but he's dabbled in a lot of things. He lives on 10 acres in an avocado grove and raises those great big avocados. And his wife is a psychologist and the children all call her the shrink. Their second son was in the military for about 10 years, I think. He married a really nice girl and they have two children. He's out of the military now and taking auto mechanics. Or maybe it's just mechanics, because I think it's a combination of auto and airplane. He likes to work with his hands. So he does that.

Then Kreg's the next boy. He lives in Bend and does -- well I don't know what Kreg does. He runs some sort of business called Bad Checks, and he takes checks that are bouncing and does something with them, and I've never been able to figure out what he does. But anyway he does that, and he's a hunter and a fisherman, and seems to earn enough money to play quite a bit. He also has some friends who are quite wealthy, and he goes with them a lot, cause Kreg's a fun guy.

MF: Does he have children as well?

JSR: Yes, he has two. One is going to school here at LBCC. She's studying to be a... well I don't know what she's studying to be. Anyway she's going to school. Tracy. And McKenzie goes to SCAD, which is Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia, and she's studying jewelry. She's apparently very good because she just designed some piece that the teacher is taking to Hong Kong to show some group that is over there. She's been thinking that she'd like to buy a Savannah house, an antique house of some sort and have a jewelry store below and live above. So she's got her life all figured out.

Then there's Kathy, who lives in Portland, and she's married to Meade Clifford, which is kind of interesting because you know, we have a man living over here whose name is Clifford Mead. Meade ran a business storing hospital records, and he built that up to a very big business. And then all of a sudden, Iron Mountain came in. They were an international company and they bought him out, so he does some other things now.

MF: Do they have children?

JSR: Yes, they have three. The oldest one is Grant and he goes to school at one of the California schools, it's the catholic school that's in San Diego, up on the hill [University of San Diego]. It's a very prestigious school. They aren't Catholic, but he wanted to go someplace where he could wear flip flops and shorts. He's going to graduate this year and he thinks he's going to go to law school. And then Collin is a high school senior. I don't know what I'm going to do about graduation this year -- we've got all these kids graduating. McKenzie will graduate from SCAD. Grant's going to graduate from California, Collin's going to graduate from Lincoln High School. I don't know how I'm going to get to all those!

Collin goes to Lincoln High School. The poor kid, he's had health problems. He wants to be an athlete. But he just had his tonsils out and it was a real brutal operation, he was in the hospital for three or four days. They say that when you're older and you have your tonsils out, it's real rough. And it was! He had a few days there of being miserable. So I don't know what Collin will be interested in. He's looking at schools now. And then there's little Brent, who's interested in nothing but lacrosse. He eats, sleeps, everything lacrosse. And I guess he's a pretty good player because he was chosen as one of two

in the Portland area to represent the teams that play there. He's played in Philadelphia, and this is in middle school! He's played in Seattle and he's played in Southern California. I don't understand that, I think that's too much for middle school kids. But I guess he's pretty darn good.

Then there's Kim, and she's the baby. She's married to Walt Griffiths, and she and Walt are now doing the Courtyard through their non-profit called Relevance. They've been working really hard to get it fixed up so that students can live there. It was in terrible shape. They've got 14 students living there, and they're the nicest young people. They have to be kind of religiously oriented, not any particular denomination, but they're all enthusiastic about where they live and they're spreading the word. Kim says that by next year they'll have a waiting list.

MF: Are they living here in town while they're working on that?

JSR: Yes, they're living out on the end of 29th Street.

MF: Otherwise, didn't they live in Portland? Have they moved down here for good?

JSR: Yes. Walt's been an interesting husband. He was an FFA boy, and when he finished college, he had six greenhouses and ran a nursery. He took horticulture in college. But he worked for a rubber company and... he's always landed on his feet with a very good job. But now they've decided they'll do this. Who knows what they'll end up doing?

MF: And she was a teacher?

JSR: Yes, she was trained as a teacher.

MF: She's not doing that anymore?

JSR: No, she's working with Walt at Relevance. She was substituting when they lived in Portland. And they have twin daughters, Jennifer and Kristin. Kristin graduated from Seattle Pacific in business and has a job in Portland with a computer company. She hates her job but makes good money. And Jennifer graduated in home economics or health and human science, and has a job in Portland that she just loves, but doesn't make much money. She manages an office for some brokers.

MF: But she had an interest in home economics -- it's nice that you share that.

JSR: Well yes, she did. And she worked a lot in KidSpirit when she was here. She worked there almost all the time she was here.

MF: It's wonderful that you can even name all of these grandchildren and talk about them individually. Did you spend a lot of time with them when they were growing up?

JSR: More so with Kim's children than the rest of them, because they were in Portland. I spent time with Kathy's children when they were younger. But I don't drive to Portland anymore, so I don't see them nearly as often as I used to.

MF: I know they stay in touch because last time I was here, one of them called.

JSR: Yes, they all call -- we think cell phones are just great.

MF: What were some of the things you did with them when you could spend more time with them?

JSR: Well we shopped a lot. They loved to shop with Grandma cause you know who buys them stuff. But we did a lot of things together. We had a lot of picnics together.

MF: Did you share your cooking and sewing skills with them?

JSR: Well not much. Maybe making sugar cookies. They all like my sugar cookies. This holiday I'm taking the rolls and the sugar cookies for my part of the Thanksgiving dinner. And last night I was talking to Kreg and I said, "Boy, it takes

me a long time to make rolls, I'm just not as fast as I used to be." And he said, "Don't worry about the rolls, just bring the sugar cookies." So that's kind of the thing that I'm noted for, I guess.

I loved it when Kim had her twins, because she lived in Lebanon at that time. Walt was still doing the nursery. When she and Walt were married, she had another year in school. She was married when she was a junior and Walt was a senior. Her daddy had said, "I don't mind your getting married, but you're going to finish school." Well what happened was that she got pregnant. And then they found out they were having twins, and of course in the meantime Kermit died. So I said, "You know you promised your daddy that if you got married..." And she said, "I know." "Anyway," I said "My advice to you is to get busy." She only had her student teaching to do. I said, "You need to do that before your kids get mobile. It's a lot easier to take care of them when they're not wandering around." And Walt was home during the day because he was running the nursery, so if there was an emergency, he was there, so that worked out.

Anyway, Kim was able to get a student teaching situation in Lebanon, so she wasn't far away. And she finished up and got her degree. But I was over there a lot, taking care of the kids. They had full-time help but, you know, I liked to go over there and help feed the kids. She was a great mother. Twins didn't bother Kim at all. I can still see her sitting on the davenport, and one baby would be lying over there and she'd be feeding this one and that one would be yelling, and she'd pat them on the back and say, "Now it's your turn next!" She was a wonderful mother!

MF: Last time I was here and you got that phone call, you were going to be sending down one of your sons' Boy Scout shirts to one of your great-grandsons.

JSR: Yes, I did that and he's absolutely ecstatic. This one was a red flannel Boy Scout jacket. I don't know if you know, but that's quite a deal when they get that. And they put all their patches on it. This one was all covered in patches. And I asked my son Ken what to do with those patches and he said, "I'd take them off, because he needs to earn his own patches." So anyway, I've got them all in a little Ziploc bag, and I'm taking them over to Kreg, who earned the patches. And I sent the jacket to the cleaners and then sent it down to Derek's boy. So Ken called me and said, "Boy, is he one happy boy! He's just crazy about it." And you know it looked brand new when it got back from the cleaners, it was just great. It kind of fluffed up all of the sewing, it worked out just really well.

MF: Are there other things that you saved from when you were a little girl that you have passed on to your grand children?

JSR: I can't think of anything. The only thing that I saved of Kathy's was a dress of beautiful satin stitch that she made. I think it's a real special little dress, and it's been hanging back there for 20 years, just because I enjoy seeing it.

MF: I had some general questions that are more philosophical, to bring out some of your reflections on your life. I feel that what you're leaving in this book is a statement of your legacy. Do you have a sense of what you want your legacy to be? What do you think your children and your community should remember about you?

JSR: Oh gosh, those are hard things to answer. I just hope that people remember that I tried to live by the golden rule, I guess is my philosophy. I like to have people treat me as I want to be treated, and like I want to treat them. I've always kind of lived by that, hopefully, by that philosophy. I don't know really what else to say about that. I want to feel like while I'm on this earth that I'm contributing something to society. And I guess that's why I like to get out and do things – I don't want to just sit.

And we haven't talked about knitting. That's one of my hobbies.

MF: You've shown me, and you told me you actually got started when you were in high school, while you were waiting for your dad.

JSR: [Showing afghan in progress.] This one is for Collin. I've knit an afghan for each one of the children. Most of them, at least the ones that have asked for it. He's a big boy, he wanted something heavy and his mother wanted something he wouldn't put his toes through.

[White afghan] This one -- we might take a picture of this one, because I'm most proud of this afghan. This is the one that I made while I was waiting for Ken when he was a football player. And I knit most of this under a streetlight.

MF: Waiting in your car while he was at practice? It's gorgeous. What a variety of stitches.

JSR: Yes, I'm very pleased with this one. While he was playing, I knit it for myself. But I've knit I don't know how many of these. I knit one for Uncle Norm. That was my husband's brother, and he had a real hard time. When he was getting older, they just kind of chopped him in pieces. He lost a leg, and an arm. I don't know what he had. It's a long time ago and I've forgotten. Anyway he needed a blanket to keep warm, he didn't have very good circulation. But I'm real proud of this one. It's probably the fanciest one I've got.

And I do needlepoint. I have a couple at the beach that I've done in shells and that sort of thing. This one is probably the fanciest. I did all of it except the border, and I got to the point where I just couldn't do those fine stitches. It was pink on the background too, and I couldn't see where I'd been or where I was going.

MF: Who finished it up for you?

JSR: Kathy -- she does beautiful needlepoint. She has inherited more of my clothing and textile abilities than anybody else. Kim doesn't like to do that much.

MF: So you've been a single woman for quite a long time, and I'm sure that has its challenges, but are there parts of that living situation that have been good for you, that have helped you to grow?

JSR: Well I think -- Kermit and I never got to travel very much. We did have that one lovely trip to Japan, that I think we talked about, but when Uncle Norm died, my sister-in-law [Marie] and I traveled quite a bit. We probably went on five or six lovely trips. And we traveled in Europe a lot. My husband never wanted to go to Europe, there was something about World War II that made him just not want to go to Europe. But we did go a lot to other parts of the world. Anyway, Marie and I traveled quite a bit together. Then when my brother died, Betty, my sister-in-law and I traveled quite a bit together. I really enjoyed that very much. I had enough income to support some travel, so it worked out well.

MF: When you were traveling, what appealed to you the most?

JSR: Well Hawaii was my favorite, because it's clean, people speak English, the money is the same -- It's easy. And of course the weather's always good. I don't remember -- did we talk about Betty and I owning a condominium over there?

MF: No, but I'd like to hear about it.

JSR: Of course she's gone, she's been gone for several years. She had Alzheimer's. We decided when we got this condominium that we were only going to have family use it. Well all of a sudden, people were thanking me for going to stay in my condominium, and I thought she was being a little presumptuous. But it turned out that she really had not remembered that we had this understanding. Anyway, I didn't give her any reason why but I told her I wasn't interested in having the condominium anymore, and she said she would buy me out. It was all very amiable. And then I realized a few years later that she just really wasn't herself. So it was OK. And my nephews just couldn't be nicer to me, they're just wonderful boys.

MF: You told me Kermit was a scuba diver. When you were in Hawaii, did you do a lot of scuba-diving as well?

JSR: Yes, he taught me how to scuba dive, and we always went snorkeling. I wasn't as comfortable going by myself too much, so he would always take my hand and we'd go out together and he'd say, "Mmmph mmph" meaning Fish! Fish! Betty and I did a lot of that too, she liked to snorkel. So when we had our condominium, we'd go snorkeling almost every day.

MF: How long did you have it together?

JSR: About three years. And I think most of the kids went over once or twice. They were at the age where they didn't have a lot of extra money for the fare over, let alone for the staying, so they could manage it every once in a while but not too often.

MF: And you had taken them over quite a bit when they were younger?

JSR: Yes, we'd always gone over at spring break.

MF: One thing we didn't talk about – I know that Kermit was involved in the church and you have been involved with your church as well. Do you consider yourself a very spiritual person?

JSR: Well I think I am. I'm more – I don't talk about religion too much. My daughter and son-in-law, Kim and Walt, are very religious. They talk about it all the time and they pray before meals, that sort of thing. I'm more of the kind that keeps their religion to themselves. And my husband, I think I've got a lot of his feelings in me, because he always said if he dealt with some businessman who broadcast his religion and had visible things on his desk that portrayed his religion, it just raised a red flag with him. He said "I know too many men who go to church every Sunday and just will backbite you during the week." And I think I've inherited a lot of that feeling. I've tried to live by the golden rule, as I say.

MF: The other big-picture issue I wanted to ask you about was whether there have been any social or political issues that have been important to you as you've come through your life.

JSR: Well I'm a firm believer that you should – that babies should be between your husband and your doctor and yourself. I'm really miffed that people can't see that – that it's none of the government's business.

MF: Have you ever been active in any causes, or is that just a personally held belief?

JSR: No, I'm not a cause person. And I guess the other thing is in church too, I feel that if you want to be a lesbian... You know the Congregational Church is big on people being lesbians. And I had to give up the Congregational Church, even though my background is there. But it's also in the Presbyterian Church, and I'm a Presbyterian now. Because the Congregational Church hired a lady, probably 10, maybe 15 years ago, who came and was part of the church. I think she was the Sunday school teacher that they hired, the young people. And she thought that lesbians were just the best thing that ever happened to anybody. And when she first came, there was a picture of her in the paper almost every week, and I thought, "I am just sick of that." So the minister came to see me and I said, "Do you advertise what goes on in your bedroom?" "Well, no." "Well I don't know why lesbians have to advertise that they're that persuasion. I'm just not going to support the church until you change the rules."

MF: And it was mostly a matter of how public she was being about it?

JSR: Yes! I don't care – the home ec teachers over here have always lived together, but they haven't advertised – and a lot of them are just doing it because they needed friendship, you know. And there's nothing wrong with that. But to advertise how you feel about your personal – just galls me. And I don't mind if you print that.

MF: Are there particular things that you're grateful to have had in your life?

JSR: Yes. I think I'm grateful for the fact that I've had a good education and that I have been able to use it in many different ways, and that I've been able to contribute to society, yes, and that I've been able to earn enough money to live comfortably.

MF: And to share what you have?

JSR: Yes.

MF: Is there anything that feels unfinished about your life at this point? Are there things that you have left to do or that you'd like to do better?

JSR: No I don't really think there's any unfinished business. I don't know that I had any great broad plans to do anything, it kind of all sort of just evolved. I don't think I had any grand notions of what I could accomplish, it's just that when the opportunity came and I could see that I could help a little bit, why, I took advantage of that. It wasn't anything pre-meditated.

MF: Do you have any advice for your grandchildren or great grandchildren – anything you would suggest to them as an overall way to live your life?

JSR: I think the main thing is that you need to be fair and you need to be honest. And you need to take advantage of opportunities that have presented themselves. I just think that it's important that you be happy.