



## Memories of Clackamas County Extension, November 18, 2016

**Title**

Of Teaching, Family Forestry and Extension

**Date**

November 18, 2016

**Location**

Enquist residence, Molalla, Oregon.

**Summary**

In her interview, Merilly Enquist discusses her family lineage from her vantage point as a fourth generation descendant of Oregon pioneers. In this, she describes her family's acreage and touches upon her education and notable events growing up during the war years. She likewise notes her early connection to 4-H and the year that she spent working for the OSC Extension Service under the supervision of John Inskeep. From there, Enquist provides an overview of her undergraduate years at Oregon State College, commenting primarily on her academic progression in Business Education as well as her social experiences. Next, Enquist touches upon her marriage and move to Portland, her career as a teacher, and her reacquaintance with the Clackamas County Extension offices. The remainder of the interview focuses on her management of Christmas tree and timber stands harvested from her family land. Notes on family and activities in retirement are included as secondary topics.

**Interviewee**

Merrily Enquist

**Interviewer**

Mike Dicianna

**Website**

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

## Transcript

**Mike Dicianna:** OK, today is Friday, November 18th 2016 and the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project has the pleasure of capturing the story of Merrily Enquist. She's from the class of 1959 and OSU Clackamas County Extension emeritus. We're at her home in Molalla, Oregon. My name is Mike Dicianna, I'm an oral historian for the Special Collections and Archives Research Center in the Valley Library.

One of the things we always like to start out with is a short biographical sketch on folks, like where and when you were born, some early family memories, elementary school type things.

**Merrily Enquist:** Ready? OK. I was born right here, not in Molalla but in Oregon City, but we lived out on my grandfather's farm when I was old enough to remember. Prior to that we even lived down on the river, on the Molalla River, in a little cabin down there. And I have some beautiful memories from when we lived down there. Even though, somehow, I could remember it was so significant, but I was small enough that when we would go most evenings up to an old couple's house, Guy and Mary Dibble. Guy Dibble was a famous person around here because he played the violin so beautifully. He could play two styles; he could play barn dance music, wonderful stuff. Then, one day we were down at their house – we spent lots of time with them – and my mom said something about "can you play something classical?" And he said "sure." He re-tunes his fiddle, and he played something that would just break your heart it was so incredibly beautiful. He was a member of a very musical family. His sister played a dulcimer; have you heard of that? We didn't know anything about it, and I got to go hear it once at her house. It was like fairy music to a little kid; they play it with the little hammers.

**MD:** [Yes] It's a branch and it's drawn out.

**ME:** But those were beautiful days down there, living right by the river, having all that music. Where did we go from that? I don't know, probably – my next big memory was being a few years old, four growing on five, and we were living in a one-room cabin on the south end of my grandparent's property. My grandparents had, altogether, about 600 acres out here south of Molalla up in the mountains. Had a beautiful farm. My grandfather was a great farmer, a very successful one even through the '30s. He knew how to manage the bucks and how to invest his money and so forth. In fact, even as a little kid, a little tiny kid, he would talk to me about investing money and how it was important to save money, and then I followed him around a lot because I pretty much lived with him for quite a while.

And my parents were busy, especially when I got to be six or seven years old, because my parents were so involved with what their work was. My mom was raising turkeys and all kinds of things because it was the wartime and my dad was working in the woods. He was deferred – he was called up and volunteered for the Navy, and then when they interviewed him they said "no, no, you are working at a job that supports the war, and you have two children and a wife and a farm and your producing turkeys" – we raised thousands of turkeys that were sold to the government for the sea rations. So they said "no way, you're not going anywhere." So I was very fortunate that my dad didn't have to go off and fight a battle or be on a ship that went down. He wanted to be in the Navy, he said.

So my dad lived to be a ripe old age of 80-something or other. My mom lived to be a pretty old lady too. I don't remember just what her age was, but my dad died first. He was about three years older than my mom, but she hung on for a little while after that. I, of course, went on and graduated from Oregon State down in Corvallis, and when I graduated I moved to Portland and lived there all those years.

[0:04:50]

**MD:** One of the things that I always like to ask folks – every generation has that memory that imprints on them, whether it be Pearl Harbor or the Kennedy assassination or even nowadays it's the Challenger disaster. But you lived through the war. Do you remember the period around Pearl Harbor?

**ME:** Very clearly. I have very clear memories about it. My brother was born during the blackout time that we had. In fact, my dad was driving my mom to the hospital, he had to have lights on and the police stopped him and said "you can't drive around with your lights on, what are you doing?" And he said, "my wife is having a baby." And they said "drive on sir, [laughs] get her there in time." Which he did.

Anyway, I spent a lot of that time up at my grandparents' house, and I would hear the airplanes going over. And I knew we had a war with Japan but I don't think I really understood where Japan was. I was six years old; five or six. I really expected every time that I heard a bomber go over – and we had bombers going over, they were the big heavy thundering airplanes – but I always thought some of them might be from Japan. So I was always kind of worried; I'd be looking, maybe go and hide or something. [laughs] I didn't understand, well, if the Japanese bombed us they would come from the ocean, because I had never seen the ocean. I was probably about ten to twelve the first time we went out to see the ocean.

**MD:** We didn't go very far from home back then.

**ME:** Back in those days during the war, gas was rationed and you planned where you were going to go and how many miles it was. It was hard, living back there. And the tires, you couldn't get tires. And I remember my mom and my grandmother and I had to go into town. Of course, everything is rationed, there's little to no meat, and all kinds of things like that. And fresh fruit, it would only be a local thing, we wouldn't get bananas; what was a banana? Oh but if they had to ship it, they didn't have time to ship things like that. So life was kind of interesting back in those days.

**MD:** So you were in the early part of elementary school during the war itself.

**ME:** Oh yeah.

**MD:** Now did the kids try to help with the war effort and do scrap drives?

**ME:** I don't remember a whole lot about that.

**MD:** That was more, I think, the older kids.

**ME:** Yeah. Well, I went to Maple Grove School, which was first through eighth grade. So we had older kids and younger kids. No, I don't remember about that part. I started when I was five years old, and it wasn't too awfully long before I got sick. But the reason I got sick was the school had these two basements, and they didn't ever clean the basements, they were just full of dust. And we would go, if it was rainy as it probably was, the kids would all go down into the basement. And we had roller-skates that you could strap onto your shoes – that was big right then – and so a whole bunch of us had roller-skates, so we were down there. And the dust was just going like this and we were breathing in all this dust and I got a terrible infection in my sinuses. I was staying with my grandmother and she took me to the doctor in Molalla and he said "oh yeah, she's got a bad infection." He said, "there's a new medication we're using in the military, and I can prescribe it too, it's a sulfa drug." And my grandmother said "oh no. No, no, no, no, no. No drug, we don't know what it might do to her, it hasn't been tested." So I got something else, and I was sick for weeks with this thing, out of school, because my grandmother didn't want us to have the things that they were using in the military even. It took me a couple of tries to get through the first grade, but after that I was off and running.

[0:09:28]

**MD:** Well, how about your high school? You went to school here in Molalla, in Molalla High School?

**ME:** I had a great time there. I really liked school. I had fun at school and I did decently well. But when I went to high school, it was a whole different thing. But right away I got into a typing class because my mom wanted me to learn how to type. And I really like typing, and next thing I knew I had this – he was a boyfriend but we weren't going out at that time. But we would challenge each other, and during off time we'd go up to the typing room and we'd race each other. We got to be really good typists. And he also was a friend – my dad played for Saturday night dances, and this kid and his brother would come there and there were some other kids we knew. And they were doing square dancing and stuff like that. We were perfectly safe there with a bunch of adults, and once in a while there'd be drinking and once in a while a fight would break out. But I never felt like there was any danger, because my dad was sitting right there on the stage.

**MD:** Keeping you under his eagle eye. [laughs]

**ME:** He had his eagle eye on everything. But I was only there once when they emptied the place with fighting. I went up where my dad was and stayed with him on the stage. They just continued playing music until everybody got done fighting and came back in.

**MD:** Some things never change. [laughs]

**ME:** Some things never change. God, it was kind of wild. But it was really fun and several of us kids were there and we had our own little square for dancing and things like that.

**MD:** Well, one of the things that I've learned is that you had exposure to the 4-H program early on. Did it kind of shape your further career path?

**ME:** Oh yeah. I think every time we had a meeting, a 4-H meeting, we had to stand up and say the oath thing, and pledging your heart and your hands and all that business. And I think we always took that pretty seriously. And I had animal projects – a Jersey cow, and then I had a steer that I took clear to the Pacific International and all that in Portland. But this fellow was a veteran of the – would it be Vietnam War? He was a war veteran, I remember, because he had lost most of one hand, and he always walked around with his stubby hand in his hip pocket. But he was a great guy, and he challenged us all the time to do things. He was just really great, and he expected us to perform up to snuff. [laughs] It was kind of like being in the Army. But he was a great 4-H club leader and he was really the only 4-H leader I had. I don't remember another one.

But I did individual projects in 4-H and did well with them sometimes. Once I decided – again, I would spend a lot of time with my grandmother and I liked to grow flowers, so I decided I'd sign up and have this gardening project. So I did all this and I could enter my flowers – if you just showed your flowers in a 4-H project it was just a flower in a jug. But I decided I was going to enter in the adult part of the county fair. So I made a flower arrangement and I thought "well, I better figure out what kind of flower arrangement" and so forth. So I got a book and studied up on how do you do flower arranging? And I did this thing, and took it down there, and I was so surprised: I came back and it had this purple ribbon on it! I'd never gotten a purple ribbon on anything. A blue ribbon was pretty unusual, but I got a purple one. And then by the time I discovered about the purple ribbon, then there was a little sign that said who the judge had been. Oh my gosh, my flower arrangement I had done after studying this Japanese flower arranging book, and he turned out to be the guy, the judge! And I thought that "oh boy, no wonder I got a prize for it."

**MD:** That's right he decided that you – [laughs]

**ME:** I used all of his principles. So I guess it's kind of hard for him to say I didn't deserve that purple ribbon. But going to the fair was so much fun for me when I was first doing it because my grandmother – people used to camp in the grove at Canby, on site...well, it was within the fairgrounds. And so my grandmother and I would take a tent and we'd go down there and camp the whole week that it was on. It was a week...ten days? I don't know, it was a long stretch. But anyway, we stayed down there and had a great time because there was no way I was going to get taken back and forth, I knew that. [laughs]

[0:14:49]

**MD:** Yeah. Well, probably 4-H was integral with your high school days. Everybody was in either 4-H or FFA.

**ME:** Oh yeah. And FFA, of course, is still important here. And in fact, girls now are involved in FFA; they weren't involved back in my day.

**MD:** Oh ok, so 4-H was for...?

**ME:** 4-H was for boys and girls and that had nothing to do with high school. Not at Molalla anyways. But I did lots of things in high school. Co-edited the high school paper with my boyfriend and all kinds of good stuff. [laughs]

**MD:** Well, you ended up going to Oregon State University and one of the things that I've noticed is that, before you went to college, you got involved with Extension.

**ME:** Worked a year.

**MD:** Worked a year, with one of the Extension legends.

**ME:** John Inskeep.

**MD:** John Inskeep. How did you get that? Did you just kind of work into that?

**ME:** John Inskeep had been practically a member of the family. And that's the reason I got the job, let's be frank about that. But anyway, he would come out and visit the farm. He was also interested in pigeon hunting. Eventually he got my little brother involved with this, and my little brother had a shotgun and so forth too. And he used to write letters to my little brother and some of those are in the museum down at Oregon City in the Johns Inskeep Collection down there. But he would write to my brother and say "you know, you've got to get your gun out and get that ready to go, and practice shooting" and all this stuff. They were really cute little letters he would send my brother. But he would come out there and do that.

And then later, not too much later on, we were raising turkeys by the thousands out there. We would get them when they were little poults, tiny little just hatched out things, and we raised them until they were marketable. So anyway, we would have all these brooder house things – they looked like little cabins, we had about five of them out there – and my mom would go out and take care of these things. And when John Inskeep left his dog Vicky with us when he would go off on a trip that he couldn't take the dog on – maybe he and his wife would take a vacation or something – so we'd have this dog out there. The dog was the most wonderful bird dog you've ever known of.

I'll give this whole story. He'd left the dog with us, and my mom and I were going out this first morning probably that the dog was there, to take it watering the turkeys. We had these big water jugs you had to turn over. Anyway, the dog's out there watching us, and somehow going in and out of the individual little brooder houses, one of the little poults jumped out. And he was just a little fellow. And anyway, we jumped out and took off running – turkeys have no idea what they're doing. But anyway, took off running like that, and my mom looked and she said – I remember looking at her face, and her first thought was [sigh] "I gotta run that turkey down." And then the dog took off and she went, [sharp inhale] "it's gonna kill it!" And while she's shrieking "it's going to kill it!" then the dog went out and just scooped it up, turned around, came back, and sat down right in front of her and looked up at her with these big eyes. And so she put her hands out and went [gestures with cupped hands] and the little poult just dropped in her hands. It didn't even have a feather ruffled on it. I just loved that because she thought: "dead turkey." But yeah, we had a lot of fun keeping his dog when he would go. So he was pretty close with our family.

**MD:** So you ended up working at the Extension office then? While you were in high school?

**ME:** No, it was between high school. I got out of high school, and right away I had a job as a fire lookout someway down in the valley and up in the mountains. And I did that for about ten days and then I told them, I called them on the radio and said "you know, this is not what I want to do and I want you to get somebody else." So they did, and my mom came and got me. I came home and decided "I've got to do something different here." And so I think that's when I pursued getting the job down at Inskeep's office.

**MD:** Now where was the office at that time?

**ME:** It was in the basement of the old post office that was right beside the river. I mean, right on the river. We were down in the basement of the post office there in Oregon City. And we had most of the basement, I think, of that building was probably – I don't know, we had several rooms down there; we had all the different kinds. We had Ag, 4-H, I think there was a Forestry person there, and there certainly was a livestock guy. And then, oh yes, the Home Ec lady. The Home Ec lady could see everything that was going on in the office. She made us – [laughs] "you're talking too much girls!" But I loved working down there. There was about four or five of us down in the office and we had a good time.

[0:20:35]

**MD:** So after that you ended up having an exposure to the whole Extension program?

**ME:** I was involved, when I was a little kid, in 4-H and then I just stayed on with it. And then when I got down to OSU, I also worked down there for the Extension Service during summer at the state offices that were on campus.

**MD:** And so you went to Oregon State. Now this is probably a silly question, but why did you choose OSC?

**ME:** Oh there's an easy answer to that. It's the only school I knew about to go to and also I think – no that isn't quite accurate. The reason I went there was because Mrs. Ridings, Dorothy Dell Ridings, who lived here in Molalla, would have been a teacher at the high school but she lived only three or four houses down from the high school. And whenever any staff member was sick, they would just have her come over. And she told me one day, she said, "I've done everything at that high school that there is to do, including boys' PE." But anyway, I got acquainted with her right off the bat, and sometimes I would get a notice from the office and they'd say "Mrs. Ridings wants to see you." She was right with the school and she kept her eye on some of us, made sure we went off to college, and made sure we did what we were supposed to do with our lives. She was a wonderful lady; just wonderful.

**MD:** So you entered OSC in '56?

**ME:** I stayed out a year and worked for J.J. Inskeep and the Extension office to make a little extra money to pay for going to school. I remember I was really proud, I worked there a year, and I had \$900 saved up. And I had paid for a little cheap apartment that I had in Oregon City and that sort of thing. But yeah, I was out on my own for a year there in Oregon City. I used to just save my money like crazy because I knew what I was going to do next and that was school. But my uncle – I had an uncle that was head of Electrical Engineering down there, and his wife was my aunt. It was actually my mother's best friends, and the one she grew up with, but she was technically my aunt, so we lived that way. Because they were in Corvallis, of course I wanted to go there to the school where he was teaching and subsequently became head of it, Electrical Engineering there. So it was nice, it was like I had family in Corvallis.

**MD:** So what was your major?

**ME:** Business Education. And the reason it was Business Education was because of Mrs. Ridings. That was what she had studied there. And she was such a factor in my life, I think she just said "now, you'll go down there and you're going to study Business Education." And then also she called me in before it was time to go down there and she said "now, when you go shopping for school clothes you're going to need this. You're going to have these white nylon blouses, they'll be easy to do in the laundry, and you've got to have skirts like this." She laid out exactly how many of them I should have, what I should have. [laughs] I'm not the only one who got organized that way. But she made up a list, "this is what you need." And I lived in a dorm for, I think, a couple of terms; one of the old dorms down there. And then because I'd been in 4-H and all this I'd learned about the Azalea House that was down there. Do you know what that is?

**MD:** [Yes]

**ME:** It looks like it's abandoned now.

[0:25:01]

**MD:** It is now no longer. They did away with all the cooperative houses, and it's going to be a child care center is what they're going to convert it into. But Azalea House, that was early in the time of Azalea House.

**ME:** Yeah, it was a great place to live. It was really nice, the rooms and everything were quite new, you're right. And it was an easy walk up to campus, it was all paved and everything. It was a great place to live and go to school, I liked it there. I was lucky. But you had to be, I think, in 4-H somewhere to get in there.

**MD:** Yeah, because Azalea, I can't remember her last name now, but she was one of the 4-H greats. And she was the one that put the house together.

**ME:** Yeah, I probably knew then but I don't remember. She'll never know now. But yeah, I lived there until I got married. Let's see, I got married at the end of my junior year. And so then we had an apartment in Corvallis.

**MD:** Now, what were some of the other activities that your – because back in the '50s, everything was going on. There were dances and there's different clubs.

**ME:** You mean here in the county?

**MD:** Yeah, at OSC.

**ME:** Oh, at OSC.

**MD:** What were some of your other activities other than school?

**ME:** I hate to disappoint you, but I only had one other thing that I did. And the first evening I was on campus, somebody said "let's go over to Luther House, they're going to have a supper there." And so I went over there, and I had attended Lutheran church here in Molalla when I lived here and stuff. So anyway, some girlfriend or something, we went over there and had a free dinner and had a good time. And next thing I knew, I was a regular there. So I was a part of that organization there for all the time I was in Corvallis.

**MD:** Now, did you go to football games and basketball games and all those sporting events and everything?

**ME:** No. My interest was not in sports. I didn't particularly pay much attention to sports when I was here in school; it just wasn't one of those things I had an interest in, so I didn't do it.

**MD:** So what were some of your favorite classes and professors that you had?

**ME:** Oh God, I had some fabulous people. Of course, I knew how to type when I got there but I had to take more typing, and the men also had to have, eventually, typing. We'll talk about that first, because that was Fred Winger; if you know the history of Oregon State, he was quite a textbook writer and so forth. And so, in fact, as his students we helped write some of those because the exercises he wanted you to know, "I want to have sentences that have all the letters in the alphabet" and you can't have more than so many strokes in this thing. So we used to write things for him, that was part of our assignments. But those things went into some of his textbooks.

But I studied all kinds of stuff down there and I actually loved it. But I had some of the social science stuff – head down there – and literature, literature was difficult for me in a lot of ways. But I had to take it. But what I did take right from the very beginning that was so helpful to me – I still go back to some of those days and think about them – but for a freshman composition class I had a wonderful instructor, can't even remember his name, but boy I learned a lot from him. And I thought I could write pretty dang well when I got out of high school, I got down there and got into this class, "holy cats, I didn't know anything!" Now I was just kind of stunned, but I thought "well, I'm going to find out." So I started and I had a girlfriend that both of us weren't doing too well in this class, we were getting C's and lots of little notes. So we kind of got a little extra help and got started. And I got a C the first term and then I got a B and then I got an A. I stayed with the same instructor and he just got so he knew us and he was very encouraging of this other girl. We just stuck with him the whole year. And I'm so glad I did pursue the writing part because now I can write adequately at least, and I would like to be publishing sometime too.

[0:30:06]

**MD:** Never too late.

**ME:** Never too late. So anyway, OSU was just the best thing that ever happened. I liked it so well I stayed there in the summertime and would work for OSU Extension or something or other. I had a job, and it was a wonderful place to live. And my aunt and uncle were right there, and I could go see them once in a while.

**MD:** You worked at the main office, so did you have contacts with people like Frank Ballard?

**ME:** Ballard. That name is familiar but I didn't -

**MD:** He was at the top, so [laughs]

**ME:** That isn't someone I spent any time with particularly. There was a lady who was head of the women's part of it, forget what it was called then, Home Ec, I guess it was. And I did secretarial work for her and a few other people. But I had a lot of typing classes and then I had a year of shorthand and stuff there.

**MD:** Well, you did mention that you got married between junior and senior year. Tell us the story of that?

**ME:** Yeah, well, when I got down there, in the first night I was there, I went to the Luther House with some other kids. So I would go along with them there and I met a GI who had just come in to start his college education after he just got out of the Korean War, I guess it was then. Met him there and we became friends. And by the time I got to my junior year we got married. [laughs]

**MD:** So you're an alumni of the class of 1959. Now do you still have contact with some of your fellow classmates? We have a couple of interviews within the collection from particularly that class – Harley Smith...

**ME:** I remember he was a class president or something, he was a big wheel. I was never an officer or anything. I was just down there to do my classwork and get on with it. This wasn't something I wanted to do. I guess I was kind of a dull student down there but, hey, it was all I could do to do that.

**MD:** So you ended up with a bachelors in, it was called Business Education?

**ME:** Business Education. I got that, and when I graduated, immediately I had a job down the highway a little ways, down at Central Linn High School, which is just south of Corvallis a ways. I could drive down there in our little Volkswagen, and I taught a year down there while my then-husband was finishing up his degree. He was on a five-year program. And so I graduated.

**MD:** What was his career field?

**ME:** Oh, he was in mechanical engineering and he was kind of on a five-year program. I don't remember just why it was, but in order to get all the stuff that he wanted to have, well, then he took five years. So I had the year to go teach school.

**MD:** Well that's one of the things that I always like to do is kind of transition from college to life.

**ME:** Yeah, well as soon as he graduated we loaded everything up and moved to Portland. And I was a little fearful about moving to Portland because all I had ever seen was Grand and Union Avenue in Portland. I would ride with my dad to the stockyards and we'd drop off stock and go back home; that's all I'd ever seen of Portland. So then he got a job up in Portland at Hyster Company, and I thought "oh God, now what am I going to do? I'm sure were going to be down there on Union Avenue in a cold water walk-up flat. And so we came to Portland to look for a place, and would you believe the only thing we could find was out on 130th and Powell? It was an eight-acre estate and the owner and his elderly wife, they had a mansion and had the big green lawn and the reflecting pool with the big fish – huge fish down there. And then there was this little green and white one-bedroom house and the whole place, that's where we lived was in the little house. They had a mansion at the other end. They were the nicest, sweetest people; we used to go up and visit with them and stuff like that, play their piano. They had a grand piano, and she said "oh, come up any time to play the piano and things like that." It was just a wonderful place, but we had a six or eight foot fence with barbed wire around it and stuff. We lived behind that in this big estate. And even our little house we had also overlooked the big pool at the bottom of the property. It was a great place to live.

[0:35:47]

**MD:** You just kind of stumbled into it.

**ME:** Yeah, we were looking around and we couldn't find anything until we kept going a little further up, a little further up, and finally we got out there. And they took one look at us and talked to us a little bit and said "move in."

**MD:** So did you continue with your teaching?

**ME:** Yes and no. My husband was working for Hyster Company. As soon as we got to Portland, we bought a house. We had no money, but we bought a house. Borrowed \$12,000 or something from his parents and bought a house. And that was just about three or four blocks from Hyster Company then, and there's a big Fred Meyer store where that all happened. But we were close, so we could walk to work and things like that. And he worked there for a while and then he was out in the proving grounds and stuff, so he was a little out of town there too. But we were there for several years – I don't know, six years. I didn't work there that long because, after a while, we decided we were going to adopt a child. So when we got Andrea then I quit working. I just taught night school a little bit after that.



**MD:** So you adopted her as a baby?

**ME:** Oh yeah, brand new. [laughs]

**MD:** Now, I did see you were involved with Portland Community College.

**ME:** I taught for them for twelve years. I only taught one year at Central Linn High School, and then all the rest of my teaching years, twelve or thirteen years, was at Portland Community College. I was there when they started the thing out at the end of the Ross Island Bridge in that old school up there. And we fiddled around in town for a couple, three years. And then we started the south campus out kind of overlooking Oswego on one side and Tigard on the other. So that was an exciting time to be out there when it was just growing like crazy, and it was just really kind of neat.

**MD:** Well that whole community college movement, this is early to mid '60s or so?

**ME:** Yeah, it was so neat. I was already working for the Portland public schools, night classes, and I would go over to one of the high schools, down in the basement, I'd have small classes down there. The first one they gave me was Comptometer. You probably don't even know what the comptometer is. I was surprised, and I thought "why are they teaching these people comptometer? That's one of the most antiquated things that I've ever heard of." And they just demonstrated it for us when I was in college. It had all of these keys on there, it was for doing money amounts. But you had to go like this, up and around. It was an awful thing to run, but it was demonstrated for us like, "this is an antique but this is how it works kids." So then I get down there and this is what they want me to work with. So I thought "well, of course I can do this," so I did it. And I taught all these kids how to do it, but it's useless, absolutely useless. I don't know why they didn't have some typewriters down there or something.

And another time they did give me typing classes to do, but they were in other high schools and at night. But at night you got a lot of pregnant girls. They dropped out of school and they had to take some school and get graduated and all that kind of stuff. So I got to know a lot of pregnant girls. And the odd thing was, at one of these night classes I taught, there was a girl in there that was pregnant and I knew what her first name was but I don't remember her last name. Oh yes, I do too remember her last name! But anyway, she was pregnant and we were getting ready to adopt a child, and we were well into this process. And I am just convinced that the birth mother of my daughter was in my typing class that I was teaching in night school. Because eventually, when we actually completed the adoption, I saw the girl's name on the paper, the legal shmegal stuff we had to go through to actually adopt her later. But she was probably two years old when we were able to conclude this thing, because adoption was, that was a hard project.

[0:40:44]

**MD:** So we're up into the late '60s at this point.

**ME:** What did I do after that? Well, I've got to stop and think, where did I go from there? Oh yes, now it's coming back to me. We moved, because of Andrea. The schools weren't so good down there, and the neighborhood was getting a little rough, because we had factory-type workers that would walk past there and go down into the gulley where the freeway is now. There was a plant down there and I thought "eh, when she's outside and there's all these guys are going by, I don't think I like that." So we moved from this beautiful old house which is still there. I now own a six-plex in the same neighborhood.

But anyway, we moved from there, we moved clear out to Cedar Hills, and we were clear up there, on top of the hill. We had the cheapest house that they built in this whole big housing development thing. But it was a nice house for us and we could afford it. But we had people all around us who owned things like – one of us right next door was a Volkswagen dealer. On the other side the guy was some big executive downtown. But we had this cheap house up there. I guess when you build a big subdivision, you want to be able to say you have houses from this many thousand dollars to this many, and we were the low figure. But it was a nice house, it was well-built and so forth. But it just wasn't as elaborate as the others.

**MD:** Now all during this time, have you gotten away from the whole Extension and that kind of life?

**ME:** I did for quite a little while because we were working on building up our own estate. And so I was in contact with my parents and that sort of thing, but I wasn't doing anything with Extension, not for quite a little while. But you know, I

was busy doing stuff, a whole lot. At one point we had three or four apartment houses that we owned, and that was a lot of work looking after all of those. And it was somewhere – we owned all those things, but we were still living over on the west side. But I got a divorce about that time. Yeah, so I've been on my own for quite a while.

**MD:** So what brought you back into the fold as far as -

**ME:** Extension?

**MD:** Yeah.

**ME:** How did that happen? I went to something or other, I think with my folks, because they were involved with Extension. And I don't know what it was they were trying to set up, but I think that's kind of where I started meeting people from Extension. And then Mike Bondi had something going down, some kind of a training that he sponsored that he held at the community college, and I went to that; in fact, my family went to that. And I don't know, I kept running into Mike. And one day he called me up and said "I'd like to take you to lunch." Well, I wasn't about to turn down a lunch. So we got to lunch and he said "I want to hire you." So that is what it was. I mean, it's just that simple, "I want to hire you."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Well, I want you to work in my office."

"Ok, when do I start?"

**MD:** Yeah, so you're brought back into the fold basically.

**ME:** Back into the fold with Mike Bondi. I enjoy my work at Extension a whole lot. It's just the greatest place to work. I love Extension, and there wasn't anything I didn't like about it. Eventually my life took me in another direction, so I had to go do that.

**MD:** So one of the things I also learned is the whole idea of a Christmas tree farm and also some forest land.

**ME:** It's all the same property. It's 300 acres and it's out here south of Molalla; it's up here about ten or twelve miles. It's the family estate, and we started out with 600 acres. My grandfather had had 300, I guess, originally, and his brother – I think it was his brother, I don't know – anyway, there was another big plot. Eventually, over the years, my folks acquired the whole thing, and we had the 600 acres. But they became elderly and ill, so it kind of fell to Ilene Waldorf and me to do something because Ilene was the family bookkeeper and that kind of thing. So Ilene and I kind of were in charge. And my dad died and there was all that big stuff. My mom had had a seizure and kind of cooked her brain; she had to have a lot of care after that and so forth. From then on it was kind of Ilene and me running things for quite a while. Eventually I got it all under control and all that. Andrea and Dean were living out in Arizona, they moved up here. I put them in my folks' house and then hired Dean to do the farm work and all of this. He was a fast learner, so he was able to do logging and all kinds of stuff and build things for the farm and whatnot. So that worked out pretty successfully until their marriage went south. So now I don't see him. [laughs] But anyway, I still have three wonderful grandchildren from that marriage.

**MD:** So now there's a Christmas tree operation on that as well as just timber?

**ME:** Yep. And Dean was the one who put the Christmas tree project together, I think, or it was my dad had it started or something like that. But I don't know, Dean was the one who did a lot of work with that for about ten years.

**MD:** Now so now you have it managed by folks?

**ME:** Now, well, no. I'm the manager now. But we had a lot of big fields and what we were doing is raising Christmas trees on there. After Dean left the family, then I had to have somebody else help so I asked Mike Bondi and he said "the best farmer I know in your area is Lester Helmig." So I got Lester Helmig to come over and he kind of took over the fields and the Christmas trees and stuff, because he was also doing that on his farm. And he had a big farm and a lot of rented acreage all over the county; he's a pretty big farmer. So we worked with him for quite a few years, and we're kind of in the

process of divorcing right now. [laughs] We don't really need his help anymore, and we're gradually putting the farm back into timber. I will leave it as a growing timber farm, and that's something that Andrea can manage.

**MD:** Now the Christmas tree industry, I mean, it's a huge thing in the Northwest here.

**ME:** Yeah, it's a big one but after Dean left we couldn't do that anymore. So I think Lester Helmig kind of came in and did some of that. And he planted some and harvested some, but we're definitely in the divorce stage there. It just hasn't worked out well.

[0:49:54]

**MD:** One of the things I saw, it was an article in the *Tribune* a couple, three years ago, and one of the things that you said which I really took a lot from it, it says "there's something very special about holding inherited land. There is both a bond with a past and a responsibility to work the property, both for current benefits and to honor the work and sacrifice of your ancestors."

**ME:** Exactly. I'm sure those are my words and I would say them again, word for word. I take it as a real responsibility because I know the kind of work that went into it. My great grandfather had come with a wagon train out here as a young guy, and he founded the area – my brother now owns that half of it, the north area. He started a little farm down there and he kept adding and adding and then his son, my grandfather, he bought it from his mother's mother, his grandmother. His grandmother owned some property that was adjacent to his father's. So my grandfather wound up with all of it eventually. So he had the whole 600 acres there.

And then at the far end of the farm, it was during the Depression, somehow there were a whole lot of people who had little twenty acres plots out there. I never did understand where that all happened. I was like five or six years old when my grandfather was going through all the legal stuff. These people had purchased from someone little plots of twenty acres out there, which is now in the south end of our property, but they couldn't pay for them. So eventually he had to foreclose on them. He would let them go and let them go and finally he couldn't let them go any longer. And I remember going with my grandma and grandpa to the lawyer's office when they were foreclosing on people and that sort of stuff. Eventually it was all in his name, he and my grandma.

**MD:** So this property has basically been in your family since before the turn of the 19th century then?

**ME:** Yeah. It was cleared – they cleared it. It was forest. When my great grandfather got his section, now where my brother lives, he came up there with his brother when he first got out to Oregon. And he saw that there was water on this property and a lot of cedar trees along the stream. And he said "I want this property." So he could just go and sign up back in those days.

**MD:** The land claim.

**ME:** Yeah, the land whatever it was; I can't remember the term for it. He proved up on the property and got in how people did back in those days. But he had a cedar mill down there and he made shingles or shakes, one of the other or both, I don't know. But even when I was a little kid there were little vestiges of his process down there. And then he had a waterwheel. And the waterwheel thing, that was still down there, not in the stream but it was off on the side. We used to see it when we were little kids.

**MD:** Yeah, because that's how they were powered.

**ME:** That's how he powered it. But when I was a little kid, most of the time there wasn't enough water going down this stream. So I don't know, maybe there were other people taking water out of the stream somewhere up the stream. I don't know why it didn't seem to me like it was enough water coming down to run a shingle mill or whatever it was he had there, but he did it.

**MD:** So now are you – I noticed that you're also a part of the OSU Extension Master Woodland Manager program, and you went through an entire program for that.

**ME:** I did the entire program and then do little things with Mike Bondi because I was a Master Woodland Manager and helped with various projects. And I also did work up on the Hopkins tree farm south of Oregon City. Wherever I was needed or saw that there was an opportunity to help with the Forestry program, I was in it. Mike used to laugh and say "Whatever we are doing, wherever we are doing, Merrily's there!" [laughs] So I don't know, I just took a big interest in it; I thought it was fun and I really liked working with Mike Bondi. He's just such a good leader and teacher, and I learned so much from him and everything. He and his wife are still friends of mine and, in fact, it's my turn to have them for dinner. And they haven't seen my house here, so I gotta get them out here pretty soon. I told him the other day, "we've got to get together" and he said "yeah I know, it's been awhile."

[0:55:01]

**MD:** But I noticed that you do a lot of volunteer work and we've interviewed Gilbert Shebly-

**ME:** Shibley.

**MD:** Shibley. And both of you guys are quite involved, I see.

**ME:** Well, I think neither one of us are probably as involved as we once were. We're more retired now and kind of sit back and enjoy it. But yeah, we both did a lot of work. But Gilbert, God, Gilbert was a fantastic guy and he helped Mike in many ways. And Gilbert did a lot of things on his property. He was building bridges over streams and all this kind of stuff. So we would have little field trips out to Gilbert's place or we'd have field trips up to mine when I was doing a lot of stuff out there. So yeah, we were both people that were cooperators with Extension.

**MD:** Now when you do logging on this, is it managed? I mean, you take a certain section and then you log it? It's family owned timber stands, it's a big thing in Oregon.

**ME:** Oh yeah. Never did a clear cut; took all the trees off.

**MD:** Managed them.

**ME:** Yeah, but we have plots that we have clear-cut and then they are immediately replanted. And then kind of work with those little trees and get them back up, and that kind of stuff. We have only, I think it is a small area that we haven't done any logging on yet. And I said something to our fellow who manages it for me now, and he said "oh, Merrily, you have more than you think you do." [laughs] So he's been down in a part of my farm where I have not gone. It's rough in places and I don't need to go there.

**MD:** Well, there's certain environmental concerns about managing the timber.

**ME:** Breaking legs and things like that.

**MD:** Yeah.

**ME:** We had a fellow I knew very well here in Clackamas County. And he was out on his tree farm doing something or other, he fell last summer, hit his head on a log and died four days later. Never recovered consciousness. So I know once you get a certain age you don't want to be out there walking around, climbing over logs and jumping on things and so forth.

**MD:** Yeah, you want to hike a little bit but...

**ME:** Yeah, I go out there and I hike around a little bit, but I keep my feet on the ground. We have quite a road system on our farm and so we can drive most places we want to go. And I really think our farm is well-developed. We have different kinds of things; we still have some Christmas trees but were getting rid of those pretty fast. And as we get rid of the Christmas tree stuff – there's a little bit left – then we're going to get this all planted to Douglas Fir and that kind of stuff. It'll be a permanent forest.

**MD:** So one of the things we always like to do is catch up with the family of our Beavers; like grandkids and your daughter. Where's the family at?

**ME:** My daughter lives out on the farm. She and her husband are divorced. She lives out there, they had three kids so the kids grew up out there and the youngest one is still there - she's fourteen and she goes to Maple Grove School. She's a fantastic student, straight A's, and I'm already making plans for her to go to college. And she will be great, we just don't know what she will be great at yet. But she could become a teacher because she's already helping to teach her class, because she just gets everything like that and gets it all done and they're still having questions, so she runs around and helps teach. I heard about this recently. So I could see her growing up to be a teacher, not a bad thing to do. I did that and I'm proud of that. I think she can be a teacher too.

[0:59:19]

**MD:** So you get to see the grandkids on a regular basis?

**ME:** Oh yeah. Well, I see the young one, Chloe, and then Sarah was living down in Utah until fairly recently; a few months ago she moved up here. So she's over at Scotts Mills area, and she lives there and is trying to make up her mind on what to do next. But she is so creative. Did you happen to see that thing with the five or six little pumpkins on it? That's a decoration she made. She engineers all this stuff, and it looks like "why didn't it tip over?" That thing is so heavy; the base of that thing is cement. I don't even know how she got it over here. But anyway, she makes stuff like that all the time. And I don't know, she's looking for a job now but I think she really needs to just pursue her own art. She just hasn't quite got ready to do that but she's just fantastic. And somewhere along the line she learned sewing.

Well, she worked for a company down in Utah, Provo, where they made outdoor clothing and that kind of stuff. They had it designed and had it made at various places around the country and so forth. So quite a growing concern there. She worked there for several years and did all kinds of management and design and all kinds of things for them. So she got a good experience there. But the company was kind of going [down] you know, how family owned companies kind of go out of town after a while. So she saw the writing on the wall and bailed out. But she has not decided quite what to do. Sometimes she works for the Al's Fruit and Flower over in Woodburn; they like her. She's good over there, and she cashiers and does all kinds of things for them. But she hasn't decided what to do next.

[1:01:22]

**MD:** So as a retired person that's busier than most non-retired people, what are some of your other interests? What do you like to do? Do you have any special interests, hobbies, that type of thing?

**ME:** I would say my hobby is writing. And I'm starting in – because I want to write something, I'm starting to write my own life story. Kind of starting in on that. Some people say they want to read it [laughs] and so, of course, I am working with Extension right now on the hundred-year celebration. There might be some writing to do in there. I like to write really well. So you know, I'm kind of taking things as they come and being retired a little bit now. Kind of experimenting with what's it like to be retired, but for the most part I don't get too bored.

**MD:** Well that's 90% of it right there.

**ME:** Right there. And I'm trying to get involved but I just haven't found time. I want to go over and do some stuff at the Adult Center, it's really a senior center but they call it Adult Centers now. But anyway, I went over there one day and spent a day there, I think there's some things I could do there. But then things were happening here and I just didn't get back and it's been a couple of months, so they've probably forgotten about me. But you know, there are opportunities around to do things and there's always stuff for Extension. So I don't know, we'll do something.

**MD:** Once an Extension person, always an Extension person.

**ME:** Yeah, I like Extension, I believe in it.

**MD:** And it's a family thing.

**ME:** It's a family thing. Isn't it though? We all – somebody was talking about that, and they said "you know, once you get acquainted into Extension it's like it is family. You kind of stay in touch and work together. In and out of Extension you do stuff together. Like the woman that was kind of my secretary when I worked there, and she became my partner in crime and we did a lot of stuff together. She and I are still working on stuff. Didn't you meet her, Cheryl?

**MD:** Oh yeah.

**ME:** Yeah, she was at the meeting at the other day. And so Cheryl and I still have our hands in things. We're at the planners now for the one-hundred year celebration in Clackamas County of Extension down there.

**MD:** Well, you're going to be a permanent part of the Oregon State University Archives as well as a major part of the history of Clackamas Extension. That's one of the reasons I really wanted to visit, because you've got a story that's really both the college's as well as here in the county.

**ME:** I kind of think I am following in my parents' footsteps because they were involved with the organization. They had the farm hero – you know what farm hero is?

**MD:** Yeah.

**ME:** It still exists; they were very active in that. My mom was a state chairman for the women and that kind of stuff, and my dad was a county chairman and things like that. So they were every active in that. I even went around with my mom a little bit. Like, they'd have a state convention, and I remember I was quite young then, but she would take me over to La Grande, Oregon and she was doing all kinds of things over there at the Oregon Convention. That was a nice trip for me. I remember I was just a kid but it was good to go along, see her in action.

[1:05:22]

**MD:** Yeah, that's true. And all these things form how you end up being involved.

**ME:** I think so, yeah. And I don't know whether I have influenced my daughter at all. Anyway, I know my parents influenced me quite a bit.

**MD:** Well, I always like to make sure we got it all; that we got the essence of Merrily in our time today.

**ME:** Yeah, the only thing we didn't talk about a lot was probably the war years. But I don't know whether you want to know more.

**MD:** Well we were talking about World War II as a child, but the other thing is now during the Vietnam era, during the early to mid '60s you were with family at that time. And you were kind of separated from all of the -

**ME:** Yeah, I was back in Portland more then and, yeah, the '60s is when I was raising my daughter.

**MD:** Yeah, it didn't affect you as much as it would've if you were a student at that time.

**ME:** Yeah, the closest I got to the Vietnam thing was my brother was in the Navy, and he was assigned to a troop ship, so he would go down from southern California to Vietnam on this big ship. But he was just helping to run the ship, so he spent an awful lot of time at the bottom of the thing, he said. But anyways, it was a good experience for him. And you know, everybody has to have some kind of big experience I guess, and that was his. Just came back and started doing stuff on the farm; logging and that kind of thing.

**MD:** Well, the other thing we always do, is are there any words of wisdom you would like to impart to the Beaver Nation as far as what does Oregon State mean to you today and what does it mean to you over your life?

**ME:** Awesome. It was awesome. I don't know if I realized how awesome it was when I was there. But after I graduated and then I went back eventually and got my master's, I really then started appreciating what my education was and how it was helping me. And how also, because I went off to college, I moved into a different group of people. And ever since

then I've been around so many people who are educated people. And so if I had just come back and if I had just always lived in Molalla, I don't know what I would do.

**MD:** The Beaver Nation opens up horizons.

**ME:** The Beaver Nation was good for me. I was never one to pay attention, I didn't care if they won or lost the basketball or football game. That was just not part of my interest down there. I wasn't particularly interested in it when I was in high school. But I did other stuff down there. And also I spent – I thought I was well prepared for college, and the minute I got down there I discovered, in fact I probably thought to myself "girl, you don't know nothing." It's like I thought I could write, and I couldn't. I had a lot to learn about that, and I thought I knew a lot of other things, and when I get to these classes I thought "holy cow, do I really belong here?" So yeah, it was a huge learning experience for me. And I hope that people these days are getting better preparation for college than I got when I went there.

And if it hadn't had been for Dorothy Dell Ridings here I would never have gone. Because she just said – in fact, she and her husband arranged for at least two of us girls to go down there, and they loaded us up in their car, and they had already made the arrangements where we were going to stay on campus. I stayed at her sorority; the only time I disappointed her was when I didn't join the sorority. I just didn't want to. I was into being more of an independent student, and I didn't think I needed it and I thought "it's probably going to cost me more there" and I was never to be careless with my money. But she influenced some of us heavily to get down there and get an education.

One of the kids that was in my class, I ran into him a little later after I got back to Portland, and he had become a pharmacist. Some of us – he was in my class and he'd become a pharmacist. Once in a while I run across somebody I know from back in that era, but now that I'm here in Molalla I'll probably run into more people that I know from back in that olden days. I hope I will anyways.

**MD:** Well, on behalf of both the Clackamas County Extension Centennial and the Oregon State Sesquicentennial I really want to thank you for your story. You're now a permanent part of Oregon State history.

[1:11:26]