



Kelvin Koong Oral History Interview, October 9, 2014

Title

“The Fixer: A Career Spent Finding Solutions in the Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences”

Date

October 9, 2014

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Koong describes his family background, including their fleeing China for Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War. He then notes his upbringing in Taiwan including his schooling and the process by which he came to study Agriculture.

From there Koong recounts his move to the United States to study at North Carolina State University, his adjustment to American culture, and his research as a master's degree student in Animal Sciences. He also recalls his decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Biomathematics, an important mentor who helped him to make this decision, the shift in his research that resulted, and, as a side note, the flourishing of his love for basketball, which included a period of tutoring future NBA Hall of Famer, David Thompson.

Koong's advancement through a series of jobs is the focus of the next phase of the interview. He discusses his first academic post at the University of California, Davis; his move to Nebraska to conduct research at the Hruska Meat Animal Research Center; and another move to the University of Nevada, Reno, where Koong worked as an administrator for the first time.

The primary focus of the session is Koong's career as an administrator and problem-solver at Oregon State University. He describes his arrival at OSU and his first position as Associate Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, where he was charged with addressing challenges related to staffing and budgets in the College of Agricultural Sciences. He then reflects on his tenure as leader of a newly merged Animal Sciences department, his participation in a reorganization of the administrative hierarchy operating the university's experiment stations and Extension program, and his years as Associate Dean of the College of Agricultural Science.

Of particular interest is Koong's description of his two years as Interim Dean of Veterinary Medicine. He recounts the dysfunctional state into which the program had fallen by the time of his arrival, explains the ways in which he earned the support of the program's faculty, and details his efforts to integrate Veterinary Medicine more thoroughly into broader university operations. He likewise discusses his efforts to work with legislators and OSU administrators to obtain the funding necessary to expand OSU's Veterinary Medicine curriculum into a four-year program.

The session concludes with Koong's recollections of more recent work, including his fundraising for a new animal teaching pavilion at OSU, his participation as a faculty representative to the Pac-10 Conference, and his stint as Executive Director of the Agricultural Research Foundation. Koong closes with thoughts on the future of the land grant mission, including what he sees to be threats to the survival of Extension, and his observations on increasing centralization of decision-making at OSU.

Interviewee

Kelvin Koong

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

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

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay Dr. Koong, if you could please introduce yourself with today's date, and your name, and our location?

Kelvin Koong: My name's Kelvin Koong, and today is October 10th.

CP: Ninth, I think.

KK: Ninth, 2014.

CP: We're in the library here at OSU.

KK: Yeah, we're in the library here at OSU, yes.

CP: Okay, great. Well, we'll talk a lot about your career, with a particular focus on OSU, but I would like to start in the beginning with your birth in China.

KK: Yeah.

CP: Where were born?

KK: I was born in Nanjing, China. Actually, it's a little village nearby Nanjing, yeah.

CP: And where did you grow up?

KK: I grew up my earlier years in the village, in China. In 1949, the Chinese Revolution, we moved to Taiwan, our family. So basically I grew up there and went through the education, college, got my degree at National Taiwan University.

CP: Do you remember anything about the move from China, the unrest that was happening at that time? Were there stories from the family about why you left?

KK: Yes. I actually short-changed that part, I guess. [Laughs] I didn't know you were interested. My father was working in part for the national government in Nanjing, and we lived in the village. And our family was a big landlord, so at that time it was a no-no. And he actually did not move with the government. He thought that all of their roots are there, so he just moved back to the village, sort of in hiding, and hopefully nobody would bother him. Then the word came out, came back, that they were looking for him, so he and one of my uncles, and a couple of neighbors, they just went, rented a fishing boat, and just snuck out to one of the islands on the shore controlled by the nationals. At that time they moved to Taiwan.

So basically they were feeling at the time, this is sort of short-term, and so on. Then after, I think, about six or seven months, it didn't look that way, so my father sent word back home and said, "Well better the rest of the family get out." So that's my mother, myself—I'm the oldest in the family—and then two younger sisters. One at that time was three years old; one was a baby, nursing. So at that time we had to go through Hong Kong to basically, snuck out. So my mother didn't think she could take all three of us, so she took me and the baby and left the middle one, my sister, at home. She actually grew up in the village still.

CP: Oh, wow.

KK: Still there, so yeah. And she has a family and so on, yeah.

CP: Where in Taiwan were you, did you wind up?

KK: We wound up in Taipei, and we lived in the city there.

CP: And what was your childhood like there, your upbringing in Taipei?

KK: It was a lot of fun. The family was sort of—my father works for the government and I guess you can call it a middle-income family. It's just like a regular kid growing up. Nothing really stood out, so.

CP: What do you remember being interested in as a child?

KK: I was not a good kid. [Laughs] I played a lot, I think. I guess, yeah, over in the elementary school I was not a good student, so to speak, and so couldn't get into a good middle school. At that time it was, I think probably now, too, very competitive. You had to get exams. I couldn't get into a good school in the city so I had to go to the sort of suburb. It's not a suburb, but the town outside the city to go to middle school. [0:05:02] Then from there I got better, and got into a good high school back in the city. Then I got into National Taiwan University, so then it becomes sort of—I paid a little attention to studying.

CP: Was there a community of people that were in a similar situation as you, that had left China because of the political situation?

KK: Oh yes, quite a few, quite a number in Taiwan. So the entire government and military, all, residuals, they all moved there, yeah.

CP: When do you remember being interested first in science or in agriculture?

KK: It's a—my interest, no, I had never had any interest in agriculture. The educational system over in Taiwan is so different, and basically after you graduate high school, and there is a national—all of the universities and colleges in Taiwan all got together for two days, and you took the exams on the six different subjects. You add up your points, and you can pick the highest one; you can pick whatever university or the major within that university. So then after one, the most popular major is filled up, then you go to the next one; then you go to the next one. So I did not—I was good at the math and science, but again, but I wanted to go to the best university, which I was successful.

I got into National Taiwan, but I couldn't get into the major I wanted. So I ended up in one of the very lower end. Some people, students, they'll take engineering; they'll take National Taiwan, then take the second ranked school, then, that way, but I just wanted to go to that university, so. And after I got into the university, the transfer to change majors was not easy, okay. You have to be really, really on top, and so I guess I wasn't paying a lot of attention academically, so I wasn't good enough to transfer. So I was stuck with it. [Laughs]

CP: That's really interesting. So they decided your major for you?

KK: Yeah. Yes, almost. Well, I could have a choice of go into engineering, then I couldn't go to National Taiwan; I would go to the second university, or just keep going. Some people do that, but.

CP: So was engineering the major you had hoped to be in?

KK: Well, not really knowing—I knew I was good at math and so on, so that would be the field you get into that's sort of a—people say that, but anyway.

CP: Well, you described yourself as being sort of an indifferent student for at least a while. Did you—?

KK: For a long while. [Laughs]

CP: Did you start to sharpen up a little bit in college?

KK: I think—how much of this is going to be known? [Laughs] I got by in college, just got by, in the 3.0 from the borderline. So at that time the environment in Taiwan is that if you want to be good, if you are good as a college graduate, you go get an advanced degree. Go to the US or any other country, because at that time—we're talking about the early '60s—there were no graduate programs in Taiwan. So, and yeah, I got out and applied at a number of schools, and North Carolina State University accepted me on a provisional basis. So I had to prove myself to become a regular student, yeah.

CP: So this was in 1964, you went to the United States?

KK: 1965, because there was a year of mandatory ROTC in Taiwan. So after you graduate there's some basic training when you are in the college, then service one year, then, yeah.

CP: Now, when you moved to the U.S. were you married? [0:10:00]

KK: No, no.

CP: That came later. I was unclear about that in my research.

KK: Right, yeah.

CP: Well, tell me about the move to the U.S. and the adjustment to being in a completely different part of the world.

KK: It was tough. It was tough, yeah. I was majoring in animal science at that time, so my advisor put me into—I just told this story earlier this week to somebody—into a Comparative Physiology graduate level course. And the instructor, the professor there would rarely write on the blackboard, and would just go straight. And I almost dropped that course. For the first week, I didn't even open my suitcase. I was late; I got on campus day one, so to speak. But I dropped that course. I changed it; took something easier.

But my advisor did the best thing for me, was recognize my language difficulty. He asked the rest of the graduate students—we were in a room together—and said, "Yeah, you know, take care of this guy." And down there, the graduate student routine, a morning coffee break and a walk to the MU, and an afternoon coffee break walk down, as a group. So they took me out and cracked jokes. So I would just sit there, and at the beginning when they would laugh, I'd laugh, you know! [Laughs] But it was good. That was really good, and when I graduated, maybe one out of five jokes I understood. But the people were good. The people there, they were really very decent people, the graduate students.

CP: So how was your—tell me about your academic progression. You were a master's candidate. You had this provisional year, it sounds like?

KK: Right, yeah, and that was not hard. I guess I knew that my first year I had to pay my own way, and my parents, they had to borrow money, so to speak. Yeah, it is true, I guess. So I got serious, and after one year my advisor gave me an assistantship. And so I did my master's degree, and then my wife came. We actually got married on paper first, because I wanted to get the visa issues. And so she came; we never had a wedding. So she came as my wife. And I did my master's degree, and I was totally kind of frustrated—the master's thesis, I can tell you, understand. It was in nutrition. My advisor was working in the minerals area, so he said, "Well, we need to find out the toxicity level of iron in the feed." You can't feed more than this much, and they want to establish that upper limit. So we did that study, and it gets to about 2,500 ppm, 4,000 ppm, to make them sick. But the ordinary diet is only 100 ppm, so it's so academic and I just got fed up with it, so.

And at that time my wife came, right after I got my master's. I just quit school for two or three years, and worked as a technician in the lab. So that put me through a couple of years. And then I met this guy in the Statistics Department. He was the director of the Biomath Program. His PhD was in Animal Nutrition, and he got his PhD from Cornell. So we can link together in the nutrition, through that angle, but also, when I talked to him he found out I was really good at math [0:15:00], or at least I told him, and so he said, "Well, take a couple of math courses and see how much you have remembered." So I took a couple undergraduate math classes and did fairly well. While I was working, I was taking a course at the time. So, we maintained a conversation. He gave me a book to read, and so I think it was in 1969 we had the serious conversation, "Okay, come. I'll take you on as a graduate student, but you'll change majors." So I switched majors to Biomathematics.

CP: So this guy was pretty important for you?

KK: Absolutely, absolutely, yes.

CP: What was his name?

KK: Henry Lucas, nicknamed Curly. Just as a side issue, when he passed away and his position became open, I applied for it, and they offered me the position. At that time I was on the faculty in UC Davis. And I guess I made some—during

the negotiation I made some demand and they couldn't meet that. It was fairly basic, because my position would be in the Statistics Department in the Biomath Program; that's where it's housed, but I want also to be a faculty member in Animal Science, because that's where my linkages are in. When I was at Davis my job was in Animal Science, and I wanted Applied Mathematics too, and the study of Animal Science. And they did not give me what I wanted there, so that fell apart. A year or so later, the dean of the college, I met him, and he said, "Why didn't you talk to me?" [Laughs] Because he was from Animal Science, so I knew him when he was a professor in Animal Science. He knew me, but I didn't! [Laughs] Didn't think of going to the dean! Anyway.

CP: Tell me about the research you did as a PhD candidate in Biomathematics. That's a big shift from what you had done as a master's student.

KK: That's correct. What we did as Ph.D.s is basically in the biomathematics, you apply whatever the mathematics is in the form of, in this case a differential equation, and so on, and there was some statistical estimation to describe the biological process. And in this particular case we studied a cow. In other words, when the nutrients come in, the cow eats whatever. We total the two most important nutrients as energy and as protein, and we trace mathematically through the cow's system how much ends up in the milk, how much ends up when the young cow is growing in terms of muscle, body tissue, and so on, and that was the thesis, yeah, my dissertation.

CP: Something else happened at NC State that proved to be informative about something that you got involved in here, you discovered a love of basketball? Am I right about that?

KK: Yeah, yeah! Yeah, I was a basketball fan. When I was in college I actually worked with the—I played fairly good basketball in high school. So in college, the athletics—college sports isn't organized in Taiwan, less than high school. It's always just try out, and so on. But I was injured and I couldn't. The college coach, the basketball coach—and he was also the high school coach—ended up becoming friends. So he asked me to become part of the team, even if you can't play. So I became a scout, and I became sort of a manager, scouting, and even to the degree of like an assistant coach would do here. So, yeah, it was interesting, so. [0:20:00]

CP: They take their basketball seriously in the ACC.

KK: Yeah. Oh, yeah! No kidding! [Laughs] It's very, very serious. So at one time I was at the ACC at the school. I'd of course go to watch them practice, and I got to know the coach, Norman Sloan. He had one just all-star player, David Thompson. I was a TA when I was a graduate student, in the Environmental Program. I was a TA for the Math Department. He said, "Could you tutor this kid for me?" Sure, sure. And he said, "Just get him a D; get through the class."

CP: [Laughs]

KK: So he ended up got a C. It's just, he was so, so pleased!

CP: Yeah.

KK: Yeah, yeah, so, and I think this is about ten years ago now, I saw some alumni things, and David Thompson actually finished his bachelor's degree, got his diploma. I sent a letter to the department. I don't know whether he ever got it, but I tutored him. It's good to see that.

CP: An interesting side note.

KK: Yeah.

CP: He went on to have a very good career in the NBA.

KK: Yeah, yeah.

CP: Well, you finished up at NC State, and then you got a faculty position, as you mentioned, at UC Davis. You were there for seven years.

KK: Mm-hm.

CP: Tell me about that time at your first academic post?

KK: Yeah. Well, the first year or so there, I think the first two years, it was a soft money position. Some faculty member was being appointed as an administrator in some other position, and there was money. They wanted to start a program in this area. Not many universities hire a mathematician in the Department of Animal Science. So I went there, and I was a little bit, I guess you can say aggressive, even though it was a research position. But I started teaching a class, and it was just an application of mathematics to animal science. And it caught their eye. And actually, I started two courses, one at the lower level, freshmen. The people going into animal science, they are scared of— they're not good. And so I kind of prepare them for it, at least to get good enough to take calculus. Then I taught the upper division class how to do the programming, how to put a simple mathematics relationship together. And so that was, yeah, rewarding. And so they basically created a permanent position for me.

CP: Had you done any teaching at NC State? Or was that—?

KK: Yes. I taught the lower division math class. Like I said, I had an assistantship. Well, okay, I had a trainingship, an NIH trainingship in the Biomath Program. But I wanted to experience teaching, so I went to the Math Department, and I offered that I can teach something here. And they were pretty nice, and we got—the system there is, again, different. They elementary classes, college algebra, for example, they don't have this 200-student class; they have 25 students. They hire a lot of TAs. So it's not hard to get as long as you have credentials. I taught that, and taught calculus.

CP: And you took to teaching pretty well? I gather it's something you've always really enjoyed.

KK: Absolutely, yes. Yes.

CP: So you set up a research program at Davis?

KK: Yeah, and basically, again, continuation of applying mathematics modeling to the biological systems, whether it's at the cow level or the population level. [0:25:01]

CP: And that kind of defined your time while you were at Davis?

KK: Right. Yeah, it's basically a teaching research position, yeah.

CP: Well, you went to Nebraska in 1980?

KK: Yeah.

CP: You got out of academia for a little while, I think anyway, the Hruska Meat Animal Research Center?

KK: Yeah, correct.

CP: Tell me about this time.

KK: Okay, let me say it this way. About 1978, I think, yeah. Was it 1978? What I did at Davis, they knew about me through literature, and they invited me to give a couple of talks through Clay Center. Because that's, again, a relatively new area, and there are not many people who have that kind of training, math at the graduate level, and biology, and nutrition at the graduate level. So I went there and did a couple of presentations. And the director at that time, before I even left on the trip, he called me from his office. He said, "We want you to come here." I said, "I didn't realize this was an interview trip, but it's not." [Laughs] "But it's how it works out. We'd like you to build this program here." Now, I said, "No, I just got started and I'm not ready to move," and so very nice gentleman called me. So when I got home I got a little buck slip, and there was a note he wrote. It said, "Any time you are thinking about relocation, call me." And I didn't pay attention, so.

I'm not trying to [laughs] build up my case, but they came after me. And so I think the turning point is that I was at Davis; I know what my research area is. Give me a computer; give me something and you don't need a lab. You just do the

modeling thing, and you would be happy. Which, I was doing well. But sooner or later you got to a point, you needed data. And at the beginning I travelled all over the country. When I'd read the papers, then I would go to that person. I actually made two or three trips just for the purpose to go talk to the guy, "Can you give me the raw data? I read your paper summarizing it. The raw data is what is needed for my modeling exercise." And yeah, again, my research got down pretty nicely using somebody else's data.

Then there was something I could not get; nobody was doing that, and I couldn't do it. I got frustrated. And though in that time, basically, they were offering, "You come here, you can do whatever you want." So I went. That's 1980, yeah.

CP: Mm-hm. And you were able to collect your data there?

KK: Exactly, exactly. Okay, so I may continue to—I was designing my own experiment there. I was having a great time. The Clay Center, Nebraska, is a town of 200 people. We lived in Hastings, which is about 30,000 at that time. And living-wise, it was a harder adjustment for me moving from Davis, California, to Hastings, than compared to moving from Taiwan to North Carolina. Because I guess the first move, mentally we were prepared. In Hastings, I experienced—I'll never forget this. There were four Asian families. All those four worked at Clay Center. So I walked to the supermarket; I know people are just staring at me, you know? [0:30:00] And I was having that California-style hair, long hair, and so on. So I cut my hair into a crew cut, shorter than this. [Laughs] They still look at you. I mean, it's not unfriendly at all, and the other thing is the people are so nice in Nebraska, in small-town Nebraska, but they are so closely knitted. And they don't have time for you unless you join their church, or—that's the easiest way. But we're not Christian, and so the social adjustment was hard. And the only people we were social with are Clay Center people.

But the research was good. Yeah, I did just really, really good research, in my own view, in those three years. So, then we decided we have to go back to the West. And the very first job I applied to was in Reno, Nevada, and it was an associate dean's position. And they hired me, and I had no—I was a research dean. It was only a small research unit, but they hired me anyway. But that's a 100 percent administrative position. So that transition is basically I gave up my research, and moved to administration. So that's the reason for the move. We just wanted to move to the environment that we were most comfortable with. Weather was not an issue; it's just the social environment, yeah. And not that people are not good; the people are really nice, but it's just, you don't fit in.

And Reno three years, good and bad experience, professionally. I don't think anything grows there, of course, but [laughs] it's just not an agricultural area. And so, there's really nothing much you can contribute that's on the professional side, for me. And raising the kids—that's a transit town, and every single supermarket has one of those—those rows of slot machines. And the very first negative influence on my family I noticed was, one day I got home. I've got two—three boys. The first two are two years apart; the second pair is seven years apart. So, and the two bigger brothers were teaching the three-year-old how to play blackjack.

CP: [Laughs]

KK: I said, "What the heck is going on?" "No," he said, "He's adding numbers here." Then the two older boys learned—that's where they learned where the lines score, and all of that, a betting line. So I was not—well, I didn't plan to stay there for long. But I did want to do something, build up a few years. And two things happened. This position at Oregon State opened up, and also that when I saw, picked up my son at school, and a BMW drove by; the license plate says, "NOT MOMS." [Laughs] And those kids, there are some just weird things when you have a transit community and they make big money, just opportunities. So anyway.

CP: You mentioned that you made this shift to administration in Nevada.

KK: Yeah.

CP: How was that adjustment for you? It probably would be pretty substantial.

KK: I think I found my calling. I really liked it, and I enjoyed it. The best thing is [0:35:00], the reason I enjoyed it is I think you can make a difference for the faculty and students, yeah. So that's why I never did—at that time I didn't want to; I wanted to pursue that track. So when the position here opened up as an associate director for administration, I applied, and that was the first position opened in the West for three years, [laughs] almost!

CP: Well, tell me about your first impressions of the university and of Corvallis.

KK: I don't know how to describe the first impression. Maybe more specific?

CP: Well, what do you remember about just your arrival here, and getting settled, I guess?

KK: Yeah, well, when I came here, I came here in February, I think it was? March, yeah, March 15th, and my kids were still in school, so they did not come right away, and they finished their academic year there and then came up here. And I was by myself that part, the few months, and I really, really felt like I was able to focus twelve, fourteen hours. Because our system, our environment in the college at that time, was pretty much in trouble, the College of Ag Sciences. The dean was acting; he was the associate dean for academics, so he moved up as an interim dean. So we have an acting dean, associate dean for our academic program. We had an acting dean as the director of our Experiment Station. I was the associate director. Everybody was acting. I was probably the only one at all who had no "interim" in my title.

And the budget was not in good shape. Again, that was something I was really good at, so. And I spent a lot of time where, in the process of hiring my boss as the director of the Experiment Station, and where in the process of hiring the dean, and Roy Arnold ended up as the dean. And so I basically got the budget situation. I didn't solve the problem, obviously, but with the new director, it was Thayne Dutson. When he came on board, I laid the book on him. I said, "This is what you're facing." And a number of units were overspent. The college-level administration, the deans, our directors, did not put the axe down, so we had to—I remember Thayne and I worked together. He gave us two years to fix all of the deficits and all of the department units, yeah. And it took us about less than two years, let me put it that way. In eighteen months, we did that. We basically forced the issue. I still remember it.

One department—I can't say that, because it was a long time ago. Agricultural Economics Department, and the department head and I sat down, and, "You've got this deficit, a recurring deficit." "Well, you don't give me enough money. I need this. I need to have it. I need a graduate student." I said, "It's not what you need; it's what I have." And so he wouldn't budge. So the only way I could deal with it was I wrote—at that time there was no email, right, and everything has to go to Central. So I had to write a memo to somebody in charge of approval, approval of out of state travel and purchasing. Yeah, those two. I sent an email—a letter, memo, to those two heads, "Those accounts, without my approval, they cannot spend on that." [0:40:00] That caused a problem in the department. And now the department faculty starts challenging the department, "What's going on?" So, it's hard, you know, but you've got to do it. [Laughs] So that's how we did it. There are different approaches to different units, and we got it down, yeah.

CP: So, was this initial position primarily administrative, or were you able to do some research as well?

KK: Totally administrative, yeah.

CP: You mentioned Roy Arnold. He's somebody else we've interviewed for this project. Can you tell me a little about working with him?

KK: [Laughs] Okay. He is not forgetting that I came here in March of '87. My boss, Thayne Dutson, who is the director of the Experiment Station and associate dean, he came in October. Yeah, and Roy Arnold came after that a few months; I don't exactly know what the month or date, but just a few months. So when we got together, they still kind of make the notion that I have more seniority than both of them. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

KK: He was a good boss, and there was no question. Of course, he had a lot of experience in Nevada—I mean, Nebraska. He came, and I will give you an example of how he operated. He knew the problem between the three different entities, because we are all very independent. The academic program is responsible for teaching. They got their budget from the university General Fund. Extension has an associate dean with an earmarked line item at the legislature. Experiment Station is also the same way. So basically, by statute, the director of the Experiment Station has total control over the resources. The dean has no control. And the only power the dean has in that system was to fire the director.

But he cannot tell him, "I want this much money," or, "I want you to do this or that." That was a problem before. You know, everybody—the dean fired the Experiment Station director, then the dean got fired. I mean, all of that stuff! So I

gave you one example, so you know. And we have a tri-state cooperation on many, many things in agriculture. And here we got a request from the group. They were going to put on a tri-state workshop or conference, and they asked—they were going to charge the registration fee. But they wanted some backup, guarantees. If they don't get enough with one of the deans, they go to each dean, "Can you do three thousand dollars?" or something. I think something like that. And so, the deans try to chip in.

But Roy Arnold, he knew what the problem was; he did not control any resources. So he sent a note to the Experiment Station director and to the Extension director, because it's joint research-extension, "Split the cost, 1,500 dollars each." For some reason I remember the number. It's not a lot of money. The Extension director's response was, "Well, this is mostly a research endeavor, so I will foot 500." So he was 1,000 short. He walked into our office and Thayne Dutson was not in, so he talked to me. "What do you think? If you put up another 1,000, can you do that?" I would just say, "Well, we'll do the 2,000." Roy, "Come on, you tell me how much?" That's nonsense. So that's how he operated, yeah. I really have just tremendous respect for him. And there's later on, the story that I keep telling people is if that guys tells me to jump [0:45:02], I will ask, "How high?"

CP: Well, you mentioned the budgetary problems that you inherited when you got to OSU. I don't presume they got any better with the passage of Ballot Measure 5? Can you talk about that time period?

KK: Yeah, it was tough. And there was the time we had—so here's the first thing Roy Arnold did to me. I think it was 1991? Yeah, 1991. We merged two departments in the college, Poultry Science and Animal Science, into one, for a good reason. Poultry Science was very small, had four faculty members. So they merged, and they didn't—obviously, when the two units got together, anybody internal was almost not acceptable to the other faction. So Roy one day called me into his office, and said, "Yeah, you've got to help me. I want you to go head up that department." I said, "Gosh, why should I? I have the best job here." "What do you mean, exactly? Tell me what you mean, best job?" I said, "You know, I do whatever I do. When the shit hits the fan, Thayne Dutson's responsible." [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

KK: And I've got a good boss. He just laughed, but, "You've got to help me out." So I took that opportunity and I did it. I squeezed him a little bit. That job was so outdated and so bad, I needed some resources, and you've got to give me something to go there. He delivered. But he said—I don't remember, quite a bit of money, I said I needed this much to rebuild our program. He asked Extension for a portion, and Experiment Station each give an amount—I forget—to me over two or three years. Extension delivered the first year, and they just backed out. And Experiment Station paid the full amount. I didn't fight a lot. I knew Roy, that he was good enough he did that for me, and I didn't want to push it. So that just shows you, when you have a division of power and resources, that's what the problem was, so.

Yeah, so I went to Animal Science. And then Roy Arnold moved up to Provost, and we had Bud Weiser became dean for a couple of years, because he signed up for early retirement—for early retirement in two years, and people liked him. So for two years' time, then we will deal with it. So he was my boss for a couple of years I moved to Animal Science. And actually, Roy Arnold became provost right, shortly after I left. Then we talked about that relationship, he couldn't handle me as an employee directly reporting to him. [Laughs] Anyway, so I was in Animal Science for three years, and then when Bud Weiser retired, and Thayne Dutson, they reorganized the college, so they took Extension outside of the college now, become independent. Their program is Home Economics, and Vet School, many different—five or six different colleges. So they became independent, totally out of the college.

But we still had half the Extension Program. Then we combined the position of dean and director of the Experiment Station into one. That was a good move, because now the dean, the money, and power were together. So when they did that, Thayne talked about he has to build up his own team. [0:50:00] So that was the time he talked to me about it. It was almost three years in Animal Science, and, "Come on back and work with me." He opened it up for an internal search, and that's—I hate those things. [Laughs] I knew I had a job, and the other guy not getting the program, he continued as associate dean, Mike Burke. But I think I was the one to convince him we'd do it differently.

We used to have an associate dean for Extension, associate dean for Experiment Station, associate dean for teaching; that's it. Let's don't do that. Let's do two associate deans. We can do it. You're going to hire two associate deans, and each one handles half of the college for you, as a direct report, and each one of them has all three functions at the department

level. He bought that, and I feel very, very good about it, because I was the one who kind of surfaced the idea and pushed him, and I think it's working, because every department head has three different functions. And we go report—if there's something we needed, we report to three different people. Now they only report to me for my department, so I know their program for all three program components. So it made a lot of sense. So after three years in the Animal Science Department I came back as dean, associate dean of the college. At that time it was a dean and two associate deans.

CP: So, what was your purview? What were your duties during this time?

KK: I handled the Animal and Natural Resources part. Mike Burke handled Plant Sciences part. And there are departments in between, like Microbiology, or like Agricultural Economics can go either way, we just divided them through sort of a workload, yeah.

CP: What sort of agenda did you have during this time? Or, what were some of the highlights of the agenda?

KK: That's, to basically start solidifying our efforts in seeking money internally and externally. I think that's it. And Thayne Dutson made a big, huge contribution. He and Roy Evans developed this program called Oregon Invest. Basically, they identified every freaking project we do, and there was the economics, social impact, and put it in the big system, and take that laptop and go sell it around the state. Yeah, we spent quite a bit of effort getting that done. Of course, we don't do that anymore. It's something that got really old, you know.

And the encouragement of faculty got extra merit funding, and we were very successful, even today. We built up that whole process, not that we did it, but we gave the incentives, like to return overhead, the indirect costs charged, that the university charges for external grants, NIH, NSF. They charge 46 now, 48—gosh, that's a crime! But anyway, out of that money, they return 26 percent to the college. And we made it a policy to return every penny to the department, to encourage their efforts to try to get that money. And the department handled that differently. Some departments keep half of it, the other half give it to the PI who generated it—some different varieties of the split. But we give them the whole thing. So that was good. I really still feel that, very positive. No other college did that.

CP: You did some international travelling during this time period as well, went to China and Oman? [0:54:59]

KK: Yeah. China is, of course—that's my roots, my heritage. And we had at the time what started as a big grass seed project in 1998. It's nationwide in China for I think developing variety for them, variety development testing. And that was Governor Kitzhaber's very first trip to China. The trip, that is called, I think, a trade education mission, and it was a big to-do. And he signed a cooperative agreement with somebody from Beijing. That was the first I was involved, and especially the Nanjing Agricultural University.

One of their faculty got a PhD here. His name is Wei Xing Cao, and he went back to Nanjing Agricultural University, and came up very quickly among faculty members. He was faculty member in 1998; he was actually the co-PI from their side to handle this project. He became dean, vice president, and several years, three or four years back, he became vice governor of the province, which is above, in their hierarchy, above the president of the university. So because of that, our relationship has been very strong. And my hometown there, I want to do something for them, so that's how it started.

And on my part, I went there three or four times to give lectures, and actually taught a class in a six-week period trip. And we had a couple of other projects we did. In the summer we host roughly around 20 students. They are undergraduates, they come here and spend two weeks with us. Dave Hanaway and I basically handle the program, give them lectures, field trips, and so on.

CP: How about Oman?

KK: Oman is a different thing. That was when I was in the Vet School, I think 2001 or '02. One of our faculty, C.Y. Hu, he was Animal Science faculty here, and he later on was in the college administration. I don't remember his title. He was in my class at Davis. But he got a job over—he went overseas to Oman, and he became dean of the College of Agriculture there. He wanted a review, an external review, so he asked me to put a team together to review the entire College of Agriculture program. So, that's how it happened.

CP: Yeah. What was the experience like?

KK: Obviously, different, culturally. They have their problems, and the native people, and at that time—we're talking about ten, fifteen years ago now—most leadership in the university at the dean's level are all from outside the country. They're trying to build their people, but then they complain when they don't get an opportunity to move up, and all those social issues. Yeah, so, culturally, we didn't stay there long enough, it was only one week, and just visited in a pretty tight schedule of business, yeah.

CP: Well, a period of your career that I am particularly interested in is the two years that you served as Interim Dean of Veterinary Medicine. How did that come about, to begin with? [1:00:00]

KK: That's the second thing Roy Arnold did to me. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs] I'm sensing a trend.

KK: Okay. College of Veterinary Medicine was one of the most dysfunctional units in the university for a long time, for a long time. Internally, they fight, there's factions, and of course, you know that their program at that time was only a little over two years here. They outsourced a year and two quarters to WSU for the Small Animal and other trainings. And so their dean left and they hired a dean. He didn't last. Then they tried to hire an interim dean. The person who came in lasted two months, and quit. So, Roy I guess, "Now what do I do?" That was 19—

CP: —99, I think.

KK: Yeah, '99. What a story. Gigi Bruce—you know her?

CP: Yeah.

KK: I was in a hotel in China. She got my contact information from my wife here, and she called me like in the middle of —2 o'clock in the morning or something, and said, "Roy wants to talk to you."

CP: [Laughs]

KK: [Laughs] So I don't remember that I took the call. I said, "Can I just get a few hours and you can call me back?" "Yeah, sure," she apologized. [Laughs] That was how it happened. Okay, I was on the—1999, that's the 50th year of anniversary of China. They took over in 1949. So they invited 100 overseas scholars, Chinese, as VIPs. Gosh, it was something else.

CP: I'm sure.

KK: Yeah. So anyway, I was in the hotel, so we talked. So we said, "Okay, we'll go. We'll talk after I get back in a couple of days." And we had long conversations about that. At that time, Roy has developed cancer. You knew about that?

CP: Yeah.

KK: He must have talked about it, yeah.

CP: Breast cancer.

KK: And Andy Hashimoto was his right hand. So basically, it was the three of us. And Andy and I go back a long ways. We were at the Clay Center together. So we talked about the college, and let's don't worry about, not worry about the details, but says, "Okay." I ended up with a two-year appointment. And there were two things that were written in the appointment letter. One is to work to get the cohesive unit going, is to do whatever you have to do. You have to have it more integrated into the university, because they're basically outside. They're on the other side of the track. And I told them that there's three units on the other side of the track: there's athletics, alumni, and you guys. You all look the same, or behave the same. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

KK: Anyway, so, that's one. And the second one, because over the years when I was in the Experiment Station, I spent quite a bit of time working on the legislative issues, because we have earmarked money—not earmarked; we have a line item. So we basically have a free hand to talk to the legislature to get the funding for it. And it happened in the 1999 session [1:05:00], just before I was appointed, before this conversation. 1999 session, we were the most successful in terms of getting the money for the Extension, the Experiment Station. I played a major part of that. I think people know that, but I'm not trying to boost myself here.

So he recognized that. So he said, "Second mission is, try to get the legislative funding for the four-year program." So that's how it started. Gosh, I could write a book about that freaking college, it was just so dysfunctional, yeah. There were fears when I started. Oh! The conversation we had, I had with Roy Arnold, was that I'm not a vet, so you needed to—I wanted some assurance that I'm welcome. "So I want you to talk to the faculty, see how." So he had a very preliminary conversation with a few faculty, that, "We don't know him." So we arranged for an interview, just conversations. The fact is that actually many people knew me through one activity I did three years or four years prior to that: we searched for a dean. I was chair of the search committee, so I took that fairly seriously. I interviewed the faculty, "What do you need?" And so a number of faculty knew me.

And so, agreement I had with Roy was that I've got to absolutely have a huge majority support before I want to take this job. So he sent me there to talk to them, and I came back. He actually asked for a vote, and at that time—I think I still saved that email—it was 28 to 1. So I take it. The one person started questioning the motive of the administration, that, "He sent this guy here is just to close down the college. He doesn't even have a vet degree," and so on and so forth. So he went to a state senator, and basically, gosh, I forgot his—he was down in Roseburg. I forgot his name. He played a major role three or four years earlier. He got rid of the dean at that time, so he was influential on campus. And there was another practitioner, Dr. Bailey, was a good friend with this faculty. So they talk to him.

And, gosh, you know, crisis now in the college! And I happened, when I took on the assignment, even before I started I called him. He was on vacation on some trip. I left a message, because I worked with him on previous budget issues. So I worked with him, tried to get his support and all of that. I said, "This is what I'm doing. I'm just letting you know, so don't be surprised. I continue to need your—" you know, one of those things. He got back; he called me, and said, "I'm so glad I got your message here, and I also got a message—I was out of town—just almost at the same time from Dr. Bailey. Yeah, he's got some concerns. Somebody must have twisted his ear. And let me tell you how I feel." He was swearing. "That damn college needs—they don't need a PhD; they don't need a DVM. They need somebody to just go kick some ass!" [Laughs]

KK: [Laughs] "You have my full support. But do me a favor. I want you to come down here and meet with Dr. Bailey." [1:10:00] And so, "Okay, just take care of his concerns." That's how things start. It was just, a lot happened there. Yeah, okay, when I took on this assignment, I decided I'm going to just devote it to this four-year program. I'm going to work hard on that. Part of the reason is for Animal Science, a lot of the students in Animal Science, it's Pre-Vet, okay? And I wanted to—helping them helping us. And so I worked very, very hard. I traveled to every county to talk to the legislator, to talk to the practitioners, ask their support, "Because I may need you to come down to Salem, to ask you talk to you your legislator." And of course, I met with a legislator wherever I go I can find them.

And okay, so there have two or three things I wanted to mention about your interest in the school. First thing I did—not first. One of those is I think in May or June of 2010—no, 2000, because that was 1999, 2000. It happened to be 25 years, so I said, "Let's have a birthday celebration. We'll have an event for a 25 year birthday." I had about 22 or 23 legislators show up. I also had Joe Cox here. At that time he was the Chancellor. And basically, I set him up. Here he is; he's up at the podium to talk about 25 years. There are 20-some people there, and one of those guys, my major contact, was Kurt Schrader; he's now the congressman. And he is a vet, so he is the one I worked with. So he's saying something, and, "Okay so now we've got a good thing going. This is a kickoff of our four-year program." [Laughs]

And at that time, we're talking about June of 2000, in May, the OUS system submitted a budget, their next biennial request to the Governor. For the first time in history, they had this, okay, this is the must-haves, okay. They've got in every biennial, the first item is the faculty salary. [Laughs] Never forget that! Then the second tier is what I call the wish list. So, that's what you do, normally. In that particular year there is a third tier, one program under the heading of, "The program we do not support." It's the Vets program. I was just flabbergasted! Why did you have to do that? So that was setting him up, and didn't like it, of course.

And I was quite—as I said, I went everywhere trying to get—that year, for the 2001 session, major initiative: engineering. That's the very first time Ron Adams got his troops together. And Bend campus. That's the very first time, that was the year. So I think there were another couple of others, plus the Vet school. High profile, all competing. I made enough noise at the ground level when I'd go talk to people, the word got back to board members, the OUS board members, the engineering guys. [1:15:00] You know, what is this guy doing? Because they told Joe Cox, "We decided we're not going to fund that. We're not going to request that. That's the board decision. Why is this still happening?" It was because it negatively impacted Engineering.

Okay, so Paul Risser was the president. Tim White was provost. One day I got a call from Tim, and said, "I need to talk to you." So, and he said that the thing is that, "Joe Cox had told me once—I didn't share with you—they said we shouldn't be pushing this Vet School. Now I've got this letter," he said. "Basically, a very direct: please tell Dr. Koong to cease and desist, because the board did not support this project." Part of the reason the board did not support the project was because the governor does not support it. Governor Kitzhaber went—I think he made some comment at some occasion that this is very costly. Which it is. Because it is very costly.

Okay, so that was about towards the fall of—yeah, about September of 2000, so a few months before the legislature—I've done the homework and we're pretty much towards that point. That's why the message, the chatter, got out. So I told Tim, I said, "We've got some problem here. First of all, that's in my appointment letter. You have to change that letter if you want me to stop, because I have to do it. Secondly, is that this has the support of Paul Risser, yeah." I said, "Let's go talk to him." We crossed, so we went and talked to him, and he explains. Tim explains, da-da-da, just the facts, "I've got this letter from Cox." See, the funny thing is Cox didn't dare to write that letter to Paul! [Laughs] Nobody liked Paul up there at the high level.

Anyway, so then Paul just turned over to me, and said there, "You can't stop now, can you?" It's a good question. I've gone that far, committed myself, and committed a lot of members of the legislature. I said, "Paul, I really appreciate your questions, but I don't think we should even talk about it." I said, "You've got your boss to report to. [Laughs] So I have a solution here if you both, if you agree." I said to both of them, I said, "Okay, so one solution, the solution I propose, is for Tim, you go back, report back to Joe Cox that the message is delivered, and Dr. Koong understood the message." That's all that happened. Interesting, isn't it?

CP: Yeah.

KK: And then we have legislative sessions started, and of course, we continued to develop the program, the four-year. You know, you have to have a proposal, have Kurt Schrader review it and so on, and strong support in the legislature. But I don't have the forum, because university budget, OUS? In the budget hearing, OUS will be there, Extension director will be there, and because there is a line item, the Experiment Station director will be there. The others is not part of the budget hearing, formally. So the Education's, Ways and Means, Education's out, and the chairman—I happened to know him pretty well. He was—used to be a meat packer. He called me and said, "I want you to come before my committee." Gosh, I didn't even—I said, "Yeah, great!"

So I went there, and Joe Cox and his two lackeys, vice chancellors, were sitting there, didn't say a word, didn't say anything. I mean, just not even, just not paying attention, sitting in the back there. Then they start asking me questions, and gave me some soft pitches. It was just funny, and I wish I had kept the tape. I had one question, and it still was, "Do you think, Dr. Koong, that if we don't have this four-year program, it will eventually be eliminated?" I said, "Yeah, very likely, but it's not going to be under my watch." [Laughs] I got some applause from the back! I know I'm leaving at the end of June, because that's my termination day. That's a cheap shot, but anyway.

CP: [Laughs]

KK: That was fun, you know. [Laughs]

CP: And you got the money.

KK: I got the money.

CP: Yeah.

KK: Yeah.

CP: And so they built the Small Animal Clinic. Was that part of the—?

KK: Yeah, yeah. Basically the way we planned it is we got the money. It was 8 million dollars for the biennium, but that we'll save the money to build—use the money to build the facility first, then start hiring people.

CP: So, that was a defined time you would be leaving that post, from your original letter. You said it was a two-year appointment, and that you knew you were going to be going in June?

KK: Yeah, actually 22 months, or something.

CP: Yeah.

KK: Because June 30th, because I would end when the legislature ended, whether it was successful or not.

CP: Yeah. So you went from there back to Animal Sciences, and it sounds like you spent two years as professor of Animal Sciences? No more administration for a little while—is that correct?

KK: That's correct, yeah. And I did start doing some teaching, and I started on my next project, doing development work. In my time as a department head in the early '90s, one of the sort of dreams I had was to build a facility, a pavilion, and for handling. See, we took our students in the Beef animal class, or Introductory Beef, or whatever, and we take the students 20 miles, almost 20 miles, to Silk Creek. So they spend one hour, you know, round trips for a two-hour lab, to just look in. Now we can bring the animal back on campus. So that facility was really needed. And so I started working on that.

CP: And that was completed a year or two ago, was it not? It was part of the capital campaign. Am I correct about that?

KK: Well, it's some legislative money, too, I got.

CP: Okay.

KK: 2005 session, yeah, and I convinced a few people, and they helped me get that money, four million dollars. That's not recurring; that's just for—that's, actually, the last project was funded—was that? Yeah, it was entirely matching, but the four million dollars was given to the university without a penny being raised. So [laughs] now we use that as a—boy it was hard to raise the money, because those agricultural people they're tight. [Laughs] But it was done, yeah.

CP: Well it sounds like you got pulled back into administration at least for a bit, as Interim Director of Extension in 2004?

KK: 2004, August, and 2005, yeah, yeah. I handled another legislative session, yeah. [1:25:03]

CP: Okay, so it was a similar deal as Vet Med, in a way?

KK: Pardon me?

CP: It was a similar deal as in Vet Med, in a way, it sounds like?

KK: Well, it was not specifically a goal, but the director at the time was asked to step down, and I happened to have served as an Extension program leader; I know something about it. And that's Sabah's doing, yeah, and he asked me to pinch hit for a year, to just handle the legislative session. And we got more money.

CP: So that's a specialty of yours, it sounds like?

KK: I wouldn't—I wouldn't disagree, but. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

KK: What can I say?

CP: Well, I'm interested in your association with the Pac-10, or Pac-12 now. You spent five years as OSU's faculty representative.

KK: Yeah.

CP: And you were president of the conference for a year, as well. Can you tell me about that?

KK: Yeah. As you know, every NCAA school, and the NCAA has a rule that every university must have a faculty member, not employed by the department of athletics, to sort of oversee things on behalf of the president. So I was appointed by that. They had an open search, and I had a lot of time on my hands, so I put my name in and Ed Ray appointed me to it. That was very interesting. It was an eye-opener. It was really an eye-opener, yeah, how things could go wrong if you don't watch it. I mean, we all read in the papers, but on the other hand this position, faculty athletic rep, if you really do your job and you watch the operation closely, then somebody don't like you. You can coast down that job assignment, yeah, very easily, especially if you have been a jockey in the past, and trying to. We had, well—I forgot about that, but anyway, so that's an interesting job, yeah.

CP: What were your duties as the president, that year you spent as president?

KK: Oh, that one was overblown, because it is a rotation, but yeah. The Pac-10 has a very unique way of doing things. It's that the Pac-10 has a council, okay, a council represented by three individuals from each school. The athletic director, faculty rep, and senior woman administrator are the three people. And the by-law says the faculty rep is representing the university, casting the vote for the university. So if the three of us don't agree, and I cast a vote the way I want it—but we usually talk it out. There is very rarely we have a disagreement. The worst there is Bob De Carolis, "I really don't agree with you, but I can live with it. So if you feel strongly, go." [Laughs] So then the council is run by the president, who is the faculty rep. So, no power, no nothing; it's just they run the meeting.

CP: Okay.

KK: But I have to tell you one incident that just shows how bad it could become, and it was at Washington. Faculty rep was the president of the council, and there was some issue discussed. And Washington's director, athletic director, made a motion, or whatever. And he actually, or—yeah, I think that's true, motion. Okay, so when it comes down to vote, you—amendment, right? Right, amendment, vote for the amendment first. [1:30:01] And that guy sitting right up front voted against it. Usually you don't see it, but he is so visible, you know. [Laughs] It was just—but the other thing is, of course, I am a college sports fan. I was a college sports fan, but I think after five-some years, I turned somewhat negative towards college sports. That's getting totally out of hand, yeah.

CP: Yeah. Because of the amounts of money involved?

KK: Money, money, money. And sometimes even the culture involving the people. Let me give you an example that really irritates me. Today, or a few days before, because that time I have a big thing there, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Oregon, OSU's Beaver Store.

CP: Mm-hm.

KK: All I know is the book store. Why Beaver Store? I mean, those are little things; people don't pay attention. But they don't even sell books anymore other than textbooks.

CP: Yeah.

KK: Even for local authors. That's wrong. That is really wrong. The other thing, I even talked to the editor, because that time we had a freshman football player passed away, which is a sad situation. It was the front-page article. He hadn't contributed a damn thing even to the football team, right? It's sad, but why the people outside athletics don't realize that? But, I'm done. And the money involved. I got—I attended all of the Pac-10 Council meetings, first-class, hotel, food, everything. Rose Bowl game: we are invited, my wife is invited, and Ritz Carlton, open bar 24-7. It's totally ridiculous!

CP: Mm, yeah. Well, tell me about your current position, the Executive Director of the Agricultural Research Foundation? That's within OSU, correct, or is it external?

KK: External.

CP: External.

KK: Yeah. So that's the third thing that Roy Arnold did to me.

CP: [Laughs]

KK: Three years ago there was a change of leadership at the Agri- Research Foundation, which is a small foundation. I was a faculty member in the department, and I think I sent some noises out there; I was looking for something for retiring to. And one day I got a call from Roy. He sits on the board of directors. Well, we had lunch, and I jumped on it. He said, "They asked me to talk to you and see if you would be interested. Because it was an independent 501(c)(3), so I had to retire from, officially retire from OSU, to get on this job.

CP: And what is the mission of the foundation?

KK: The mission of the foundation is to receive funding from various entities, primarily in agriculture and natural resources, to support research, mostly at OSU, and that's it, yeah. The reason I was asked to do this, because when I was associate dean I was more or less the college liaison with this foundation. [1:35:03] I attended their board meetings, and so I know how the operations—I know how things work, and my relationship with the university community at large, I think, is still okay, so yeah.

CP: Well, the last thing I want to ask you about is just kind of a reflection on change. You've spent most of your career at land grant universities. You spent a long time at this one. What are you seeing in terms of changes in the mission, the land grant mission, and at OSU at large? There has been a lot of change in a physical way, and kind of in its ambition the last decade or so.

KK: I think that the land grant university, if I can say it, that was the best thing ever invented by a federal government. And you put a land grant university, basically the mission is serving people, okay. And that's why we have the—in agriculture, that we have stations, research locations in fifteen of the counties, I think. I can't keep track of them anymore. So it's the tying of research, and the teaching of, and applications, technologies transfer, all under one roof. I think that's responsible for the progress we have made as a society in the agriculture industry. So we have a lot of support from the industry, and that has not changed.

But I think in the one arm I would say it has changed, but I don't think—we are trying to adjust to the change, but we haven't really done it in a major way, that's Extension. At Extension we have three or four programs, let's say three major programs, Agriculture, Home Economics, and 4-H. Why it started with those three different programs? You have a community; you have farmers. At that time, 80 percent of the population was involved in farming. Housewives, they are housewives and they do the books, and they do sewing, they do canning, and all that. And their kids, they don't have a whole lot to do. The Boy's Club, Girl's Club, I don't know their history, but mostly it's in 4-H. So typically, each county will have an Ag agent, because at that time the farmers, if we are lucky, they will have a high school diploma. We need somebody to really teach them how to do it. We have a Home Ec agent to organize the housewives to do those things, and a 4-H program. Good.

Fast-forward. Now the majority of our farmers have a bachelor degree; a lot of them have master's degrees, Ph.D.s, in agriculture, farming, and we've got greenmasters trying to advise them what to do. I've got the input from the growers, and we have to teach them how we do things around here. And there are competing forces, and the sales reps for the chemicals, for the seeds companies, for that, they provide the technical information. 4-H, they—the infrastructure changed so much, they have a lot of things to do—the sports programs and all sorts of things, especially the urban metro area [1:40:02], suburban-urban areas. They have to really compete for their time. Home Economics, most wives have a job now in town, right?

But still, in a large county, we still have one Ag agent, one 4-H agent, and recently they made an area concept that's long overdue, another reason that this is three or four years now, I think. But don't think Extension really in the current state can survive. 4-H is the bread and butter; it used to be. I'll never forget during my green days at Reno, Nevada, again, we had a three-lines budget. I'd represent the Experiment Station, and of course my style, I went to visit those people, members, so this is here and I was there, and I made my pitch for research and so on, during coffee break or whatever. One of the members on the panel, on the Ways and Means said, "Yeah, I enjoyed your presentation." And, "Oh, thank you." And, "You met Barbara, right?" That's his wife. "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah." And, "You know where we met? Yeah, we met at 4-H Camp." Oh, yeah, "Okay, so, I don't give a shit what you do. Don't fool around with Extension." [Laughs]

But that generation's gone, and the bread and butter, when you talk about 4-H and kids, and so on. So we have adapted some. Like in Hillsboro, Washington County, we had a very good technology 4-H program. But I remember when I was in Nevada, of course, every faculty we hired, I interviewed them. And the 4-H leader, I said, "Tell me the difference between 4-H and the Boys and Girls Club." There is none! We're on a knowledge base; we're housed in a university, but I volunteered as a Boys Club whatever when my kids were in the program. So, if you look at that, how we continue to survive, that's the change in the land grant. And I think agriculture is the same way, but agriculture at least we have an economic impact. The farmers actually value what we do here. They make more money.

So, OSU? A lot of changes. Can we turn off the recording? [Laughs] The best thing when I came here, I think for many years, OSU, the administrative structure and hierarchy, and all of the background, the environment, supporting the concept of decentralization. The university president, provost, goes to the dean; dean decides, then goes to—a lot of flexibility—to the department head. I remember, I used to tell Bud Weiser, who was my dean, and I said, we had a conversation, "Yeah, I really appreciate it. Just every July 1st, I got a free sack of money," teaching research extension. "And when I get it, don't ask me how I do it. And I will tell you honestly I mix them up and do whatever is needed. [1:45:01] So don't call me. When I call you is when I need more money." [Laughs]

At least the College of Agriculture, and many others, really, the decision-making is at the department level. But now I think it is being reversed. The central administration has become—the decision-making has been moved to the central administration. That's probably the best way I can tell you that, and I don't know how that's a good move.

CP: That's really interesting.

KK: I don't know whether anybody else told you that, but this is it. And when Roy Arnold was the provost, he never decided what position, any faculty specialty, should be hired in some college or department. Now we have that decided at a different level.

CP: Well, Dr. Koong, I want to thank you very much for this. This has been very enlightening. I've learned a lot about some corners of the university I didn't know much about, and I appreciate you spending your time and sharing your thoughts with us.

KK: Yeah, I guess I am honored to be asked to do this, when I saw the names, you know, who's who over on the list. And I don't know what feedback I'll get when people see this interview, so I may get a few calls, saying "what the hell!" [Laughs]

CP: Well, thank you nonetheless.

KK: Yeah, thank you.

[1:46:52]