Melinda Manore Oral History Interview, November 30, 2015

Title
“At the Forefront of Nutrition and Exercise Research”

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Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary
In the interview, Manore describes her upbringing on a farm in rural western Montana, her experience of school growing up, and her decision to move to Seattle to pursue her undergraduate studies. From there, she comments on her education in Home Economics at Seattle Pacific University, her move into public school teaching, and her decision to enroll in the University of Oregon's graduate program in Health. In reflecting on her time in Eugene, Manore notes her first experience of conducting research and her involvement in the community running culture of that era.

Manore next recounts her pursuit of a Ph.D. at Oregon State University, describing her collaboration with OSU faculty member Jim Leklem, and detailing the in-depth research project that she led on Vitamin B6 metabolism in human subjects. She then discusses her move to Arizona State University, the progression of her research while there, her mentorship of graduate students, and the authoring of her first book, *Sport Nutrition for Health Performance*.

The remainder of the session is devoted to Manore's return to OSU and the work that she has conducted as a faculty member at Oregon State. In this, she describes the changes that she observed as the College of Home Economics transformed into what is now the College of Public Health and Human Sciences; details her work on military nutrition; and shares the story behind three additional books that she wrote in 2007 and 2008. She likewise shares her memories of collaborating with the OSU Extension Service, and then provides an overview of work that she has conducted on rural obesity in children, nutrition and exercise for women, and healthy eating for athletes.

The interview concludes with insight into a new project that Manore is leading on obesity prevention in active youth; thoughts on the impact that the introduction of an accredited School of Public Health will make on its parent college; and Manore's sense of OSU's direction as it looks toward its sesquicentennial anniversary.

Interviewee
Melinda Manore

Interviewer
Chris Petersen

Website
http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/manore/

Transcript

Chris Petersen: OK, today is November 30th, 2015, and we are with Melinda Manore, a Nutrition professor here at OSU. And we'll talk to her about her experiences at OSU and in academia as well, but I'd like to begin at the beginning to capture a little bit more of a biographical sketch and find out where were you born?

Melinda Manore: In Wisconsin. Plum City, Wisconsin, a small town in Wisconsin.

CP: Is that where you grew up?

MM: No. I grew up in Montana, western Montana.

CP: My understanding is that you grew up on a farm, is that correct?

MM: I grew up on a farm in western Montana, a very rural community.

CP: Were you near to any town of consequence?

MM: Well, there aren't many towns of consequence in the whole state, so we were three and a half hours from Spokane, Washington, so that's probably the only closest large community. The closest community with an airport would be Missoula, Montana, where the University of Montana is, and that was about an hour away.

CP: What were your parents' backgrounds?

MM: Farmers. They both grew up in rural Wisconsin, so that's kind of what they knew and what they did.

CP: Do you know what precipitated the move to Montana?

MM: My father always wanted to live in the west, so that was his opportunity to move west.

CP: And what kind of farming was it?

MM: It was a mix. We had dairy, we had laying hens, we had some beef. But I suppose the major income was dairy and eggs.

CP: Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like to grow up on a farm? Probably a lot of chores.

MM: A lot of chores. You get up very early, we had a lot of work to do, so we probably did two to two and a half hours of chores before school. And then we – I don't know if it was unique to farm families, but we ate breakfast together. We were close enough to our school where we walked home for lunch, so it was a small school, it was a small rural area. And then we also did chores when we got home from school.

CP: Did you have horses?

MM: We had horses.

CP: Was that important to you growing up?

MM: No it wasn't. It was very important to my father, so we all had horses. And I'm sure every young girl wanted a horse, every girl in my class. I had the horse and I could have cared less about having horses. So I'm not a horse woman. And none of my siblings grew up to be horse people, it was just my father was passionate.

CP: Were you involved in 4-H or FFA or anything associated with Extension, growing up.

MM: Actually not. I knew that they had 4-H, as I think back, I knew there was 4-H in our county. But I only remember the guys wearing 4-H jackets. I don't remember any girls being involved in 4-H. My brothers were not involved in 4-H,

maybe because my parents had never really been. I don't know why, they just weren't. Also, because we just had a lot of work to do at home, so we didn't have a lot of extra time.

CP: What sort of interests developed for you as you were growing up?

MM: Very domestic kinds of interests, probably. I was avid reader, so I really liked to read. So I did that. We all did music, which my mother insisted on. And then, you just learn how to – you live on a farm, so you learn how to can and sew and cook and clean and do chores and birth calves and pigs. The typical things that I just grew up thinking, "that's what everybody did." I just assumed other people did what I did. You didn't have holidays hardly at all, because you had way too many chores to do and who's going to do them? So any kind of holiday, we never went overnight anywhere, we just worked at home and took maybe part of the day off and went hiking or did something outdoors. Our recreation was always outdoors.

CP: What was school like for you?

MM: I liked school. I was pretty engaged with activities at school, that I could be, that didn't demand a lot of after-school time. I did work part-time when I was in high school, after school and on the weekends, at a clothing store. But, I mean, I had a really small class. We went to all of our classes together and I don't remember anything really memorable about high school other than just being engaged and doing what kids do in a small community. But we didn't have a lot of social activity, so for many kids, that's a reason to get into alcohol and into drinking and that kind of thing, in a small community. Probably my biggest thing is I was an avid reader, so I spent all my extra time reading.

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CP: So there was no particular subject that you were gravitating to, growing up?

MM: While, I thought I wanted to be a history teacher, because I liked history, I liked reading about history. And I actually was a History major my freshman year, until I realized I didn't think I was a very good storyteller, and you have to be a good storyteller to be a History major.

CP: Did you always expect to go to college?

MM: No. Well, I guess the answer is yes, but only because my mother said to all of us – my mother and father did not go to college, my mother really wanted to go to college. She always said, "you're going to college," so I just assumed I was going to college even though I didn't know a thing about it. We had no high school counselors that helped you go to college. But she said, "we're going to college," so I just assumed we were going to college. I didn't know how, but I just assumed.

CP: How did you decide on Seattle Pacific?

MM: Well, all my colleagues – well, not very many of my classmates were going to college, in general. And the one or two that were going to college were going to the University of Montana at Missoula, and Montana State in Bozeman. And I just wanted to get out of the state. And to tell you the truth, I don't really remember how I picked that school other than it was small, it wasn't that far away from home, and I had decided at that time that I wanted to be a Home Ec major, and they had that major. And I didn't want to go to a big school, because I was very apprehensive. Coming from a very small community, a big school didn't appeal to me in any way.

CP: But you were in a big city.

MM: But I was in a big city. But I don't know, for some reason that didn't bother me, just because my environment there was small; at least initially, it was small.

CP: So the switch from a farming background to a major metropolitan area was not a big-

MM: No, and I think part of it might have been too, I had a roommate that was from a farm. And so we were compatible. So was from a different kind of farm, she was from a farm in Kansas where they grew wheat, not animals. So she was from rural America and just a different sense of being rural.

CP: So you majored in Home Economics?

MM: Yes, I majored in Home Ec and I think I picked it because I thought, "well, this is something I know and I can be good at." So I did it without really – I just picked something, "oh, I think I can be good at it," even though I still like history, I just thought, I looked at my History teachers and I thought, "I don't think I could do this." I wasn't really exposed to history in terms of travel when I was growing up, so it didn't fit into my very narrow window.

CP: What was it like being a Home Ec major in the early '70s?

MM: Very interesting. I think the people who were Home Ec majors at the time came in with a lot of skills that we do not see our students knowing now. There was much more emphasis on things being proper, done properly. You planned, you budgeted, you had a lot of responsibility, you had to just go do things on your own and figure it out. Students nowadays wouldn't be able to manage that. I mean, they're not as good at just thinking on their feet and doing things. They always want to know, "how do you exactly want it done so I can get a good grade?" So it's a little bit different. And it was very diverse; you had to do a lot of different things.

CP: Was there a piece of the curriculum that made a big impact on you?

MM: Well, that's where I think I ended up in nutrition, because I really liked my Nutrition classes. I always knew, by the time I finished, that I wanted to go on to school, I just wasn't sure what aspect I wanted to go on in. And so, nutrition and health kind of sunk in. And so that was always in the back of my mind. I always knew that I was going to go out and get a job, but eventually I probably would come back to school.

CP: Why do you think it was that nutrition grabbed you?

MM: I'm not really sure. Probably because I had a father with chronic health issues, so that may have been a reason. But I don't really know. I've always kind of made that assumption. It could have been the teacher – I really liked the first teacher in Nutrition that I had, so I think that may have been a reason. And she wasn't even a regular faculty member, she was like a – now, when I go back and look at it, I realize she was like an adjunct faculty. She probably made it very personable, very real. So I just found it interesting.

[0:10:16]

CP: My notes indicate that you got certificates in elementary and secondary education, is that correct?

MM: Right.

CP: Was that at SPU or did that follow?

MM: No, that was at SPU. So I knew I wanted to teach because I thought, "I think I could be a good teacher." And at the time, you could do both. And also the way their education system is, they wanted you to teach at all levels, so you had to do time – and I think I was in the third grade – so you had to do time with elementary, you had to do time with special ed, you had to do time in junior high, and you had to do time in high school. With the idea that that would expose you and you could make a decision on where you thought you wanted to be. Which I actually really liked the approach. I liked, once I was a teacher, what the other teachers were dealing with at their levels.

So I actually liked that approach because, what I found out was that many people who want to go into education will graduate and then find out that their only exposure to teaching is student teaching. And then they find out that they don't like it, including my roommate who, we found out, she didn't like it. So I really liked the approach. Every time I finished one of those experiences I would say, "this is what I liked, this is what I didn't like," and then we would have a different kind of experience.

CP: And is that what happened after you graduated? You did some teaching for a while?

MM: Yes, I taught for three years in a public school. And then I just knew, it was always in the back of my mind that I wanted to go on. So then I just assumed – since I was teaching home ec, which involved nutrition and food, but I was also teaching some health classes – that I had just decided that I wanted to go on and do an advanced degree in health. And then I thought I would just come back and teach health at a public school. Let me tell you, I'm only thinking one step at a time here.

CP: Was this in the Seattle area that you were teaching?

MM: No, I taught in Montana and in Washington, so I taught in both states.

CP: How did you decide on the University of Oregon as the place where you were going to go back for further education?

MM: Well, I was interested in staying in the west and I just applied to different schools. I had no money, my folks couldn't afford to help me, and so I just decided "I'm going to go wherever they offer me financial assistance." And the University of Oregon offered me financial assistance and they had the program I was interested in, so it was an easy decision, because I didn't have any money.

CP: The program was the Health program, is that correct?

MM: It was the Health program, right.

CP: Tell me a bit more about your academic progression as a master's student.

MM: I was paranoid of being a graduate student because I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know anyone, I didn't know other graduate students. So I was probably an overachiever, just, "man, I'm going to work really hard." Which I did. One of the faculty members knew that I was sort of interested in nutrition, and because I had taught high school, they just put me in the classroom starting to teach right away, freshman- and sophomore-level classes in nutrition and health. And then, one of the faculty that was in nutrition sort of took me under her wing and mentored me. I have no idea why she picked me. And she was kind of on her way to retiring, so when she finished she gave me all her books, and she was always there when I had questions. And kind of as I was going through that program, I realized I was gravitating toward nutrition and that I wanted to do nutrition.

At the same time, I had been injured in a ski accident, and at the time the University of Oregon was, and still is, quite a running school. And so my former graduate student said, "you can come running with us," and I didn't think I could because I had just had knee surgery. "No, you can run on a bad knee," and then I started running. So that sort of piqued my interest in nutrition and exercise, and actually one of my running partners was a dietician working at the health center. So I think that piqued my interest in wanting to do graduate work in nutrition and exercise.

CP: You were there when the running boom was really booming, is that correct?

MM: It was really booming. You know, Alberto Salazar was the runner and it was really going full guns, and everybody ran. So you just ran. And my advisor was a runner and organized running groups, so you just did it. And I think I just did it, I didn't think too much about it, I just said, "well, if they can do it, I guess I can do it." So it's not like I had a – I did not have a master plan.

[0:15:12]

CP: Was this your first experience of doing research?

MM: Oh definitely.

CP: What kind of research were you doing?

MM: I did some research on nutrition and breast cancer, but it was very low-key, not that engaged, but it was certainly my first exposure to it. I think it was more my interest in nutrition and exercise that piqued me in saying, "ok, I think I

really would like to become a dietician. I'd like to do graduate work in nutrition and exercise." And that's when I started looking around for, "are there any programs that do this?" And believe me, there are not. It just happened that there was one person here at Oregon State that was doing it.

CP: And that person was?

MM: Jim Leklem.

CP: So that explains the connection with OSU then.

MM: Yes. So that's how I happened to get here is that, I read some of the research and there was nobody else doing it. And by the time I finished, I realized there was no one else doing it, but it just happened to be, he was doing that research. He was interested in taking on graduate students, I guess, because I applied and was accepted. So four years later I was done. And, at the time, Oregon State did have an Exercise Science program, which you're going to need if you're going to do this. So they needed to have both components.

CP: What you do remember about your early impressions of OSU and of Corvallis?

MM: Well, I commuted from Eugene originally, so I don't think I had many impressions of campus because I was so focused on getting my coursework done and doing my research. I always thought it was a beautiful campus in the spring, it's so pretty here. I thought I had a very good education here. We were really pushed hard, the expectations were high, you really had to be an independent thinker and figure things out. But I thought I had good teachers and I thought I had a good research experience, because it was very involved and very in-depth. So I think I walked away with a really good experience.

What I didn't walk away with was a broader concept of what it meant to be a faculty member. I just think we do a better job now, of doing that, than they did then. I just was so naïve as a new faculty member, in terms of being mentored. You just did your work and you wrote your papers. You didn't learn grant writing, you didn't learn those other aspects that are so important. I had done a lot of teaching and I taught through my whole Ph.D. program, so I wasn't so afraid of the teaching as I was with, "well, what else are you supposed to do here?"

CP: Can you tell me more about your research experience?

MM: Yeah, so I did Vitamin B6 metabolism in exercise and did my minor in Exercise Science. Dean Maksud was the Dean of the College of Health and Human Performance, he was on my Ph.D. committee, so he was the one that really trained me on the Exercise side, besides the coursework that I took. Extremely patient – I don't know many deans that would do that, they have a lot of other things to do these days. And then, Dr. Leklem was very well-known in Vitamin B6 metabolism. And then, I think, it was sort of up to the student to figure out how to put those two together.

So we did a human study, we did a feeding study – you know, we're feeding subjects for seven weeks, everything they ate, collecting all their urine, collecting blood. It was intense. Literally, I was in the lab at six in the morning and didn't leave until midnight. So it was extremely intense, because we were feeding people seven days a week. But I enjoyed it; I enjoyed interacting with the subjects. I worked with other graduate students, and I think in most graduate programs, you have a real camaraderie with the other graduates students. But these graduate students were working on the same project, so we got to know one another pretty well. And we all got through it.

CP: Were these students that were your subjects?

MM: The subjects were young women and most of those were students, but not all. Some of them were staff. And then older women. And our older women were either community members or staff. So we had a mix.

CP: It sounds very intensive, both for your side and from their side.

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MM: Oh it was. They were quite committed. And it's amazing to me when I think about it: everybody completed the study, everybody brought urine in every single day. Everybody ate all the food, they got weighed every day, prodded. They were a pretty amazing group of participants. And I'm sure, if I found them today, they would remember the experience.

CP: So I don't gather there was a whole lot of time for a social life?

MM: No, because I commuted. With my other graduate students, just because we were together all the time. But no, it was so focused, just get what you need to get done. There was no flying to Aspen and skiing or anything like that.

CP: Tell me about the transition to your first faculty position at Arizona State.

MM: My husband and I were looking for jobs together – he's in academia as well – and we were so naïve, thinking, "well, people just do this," when in reality they don't. So we were offered a couple positions and made the choice to go to ASU. And I was extremely fortunate as a new faculty member, because I had one very good colleague to work with who was in the department, and we did some collaborative research together. But probably the biggest thing was, Dr. Michael Maksud, who was the dean here of Health and Human Performance, he called a faculty member at ASU and Exercise Science, because, you know, I need Nutrition and Exercise in the same university, so that narrowed my search down to where I could go.

And he called Dr. James Skinner, who was the director of the Exercise and Sports Science Institute there, as well as a full professor, and he called him and said, "I think there's a faculty member you might want to work with. And she's coming as a new faculty member in Nutrition." And he showed up in my office the day I was moving books in, introduced himself, and told me that we would be working together. And he totally mentored me through my whole academic experience, through my full professorship. So it's amazing to have somebody like that as well as having other colleagues that I met who were also very helpful. But I would say he was the one who really came in and said, "this is how the university works, this is what you have to do, we're going to research together."

And so right away I had a collaborative research environment in which to work, and he wanted me to bring nutrition to his program, and I needed the exercise that they had. And the Exercise Science program that they had at the time at ASU was very good, very nationally ranked. The Nutrition program was very small and we didn't have a Ph.D. program, but Exercise Science had a Ph.D. program, so I could get doctoral students from their program who wanted to cross over. So it worked out very well; I was very fortunate, because I knew nothing about the system. And to have somebody who's been through the system – he's already a full professor and well-funded – say, "look, I think you could help me and collaborate with me," it worked out very well.

CP: You became a registered dietician pretty early on at ASU, is that correct?

MM: Yes, because the transition to do that was different than it is now, and so I didn't get everything completed until I was already at ASU and then had to sit for the test. And so it wasn't until I was actually there that I finished the test and got registered.

CP: Was this something that you did as a component of your academic work? Or was it a side gig?

MM: It was a component of some of my academic work and some of my consulting work. Some of the work I did here and some of the work I did there. And I had someone there who – I had people here sign off on some of the work and people there sign off on some of the work. It's been a long time, I have to think about it.

CP: Tell me about setting up your research agenda and how it progressed during the ASU years.

MM: Well, I knew that I wanted to do nutrition and exercise, and so I just collaborated with Dr. Skinner, who was pretty open to the types of research that he was interested in doing. And I was always interested in the nutrient needs of active individuals and energy balance. Both of those things really were of interest when I was doing my Ph.D. here, and so I just transitioned into that. And not by design, but it just sort of happened that I did a lot with active women, because at the time, there were more nutrition issues in that population, so I just happened to do a lot more with active women. But I continued to do some Vitamin B6 work related to old versus young, as I did in my Ph.D. program. So I have some papers

in elderly versus younger individuals, and then I really sort of moved more into the energy expenditure, energy balance. It was a little bit easier to do because I would always have to send my samples back here to be analyzed for Vitamin B6, I didn't have the capability of doing it there. But we set up a lab and did all the things you have to do on a shoestring, a definite shoestring. No huge start-up packages back then.

[0:25:32]

CP: It's interesting to hear you talk about how small the community was at the time. I gather it's much larger now, people interested in nutrition and exercise?

MM: Oh definitely. When I would teach my graduate-level nutrition and exercise class, we would literally read all the articles on a topic. "This is everything that's published." At the same time, when I was looking for jobs, there was very little interest in nutrition and exercise; the whole energy balance thing. I had universities say, "we just really aren't interested in someone like you. We really want someone who does bench chemistry; that's where the science is going." And I knew that I wanted to do more applied kind of work, and it's amazing how it's turned around.

I didn't really do performance nutrition exercise, I was really more interested in what are the nutritional issues? What are the barriers? How does nutrition and exercise work together in terms of energy balance? We did a lot of different studies – some in men, some in women – just looking at energy expenditure. We had access to a metabolic chamber in Phoenix and Dr. Skinner knew the director there, so that opened a whole door to do research at the NIH facility in Phoenix. So I just had a lot of different kinds of opportunities, which was very fortunate. And just because the right people walked along and wanted to help. Not because I was a star, believe me. [laughs]

CP: You won a couple of awards that I want to ask you about. The first is the Published Paper Co-Author Award, 1997, the American Dietetic Association – what was that paper? I'm putting you on the spot. [laughs]

MM: You have. Does it give the name of the paper?

CP: No.

MM: I don't remember the name, I don't remember the paper. If you told me the paper, the title, but I don't remember. If you told me my co-authors, I would be able to tell you, but I don't remember off the top of my head. What was the year?

CP: '97.

MM: It might have been a study on active – I had a doctoral student at the time doing a study in subclinical versus clinical eating disorders and nutritional status, so it might have been that, because I know that paper was published in that journal. But I don't remember. That was a long time ago. [laughs]

CP: Well I'm sure you remember mentoring graduate students and you won an award for doing that well. I'm interested in the approach that you took to mentoring young scholars.

MM: Well, I felt like I was so naïve as a new faculty that I didn't want them to be. So I think that was kind of my approach. And also, I'm a firm believer that you treat people the way you want to be treated, and I understand there's a real power differential between a graduate student and a faculty member, and so I tried to really clearly state where the line was drawn. "This is my responsibility, this is your responsibility." And I wanted to also expose them to the experiences they wanted.

And at the time, ASU also started a couple of programs for graduate students. One was called Training Future Faculty, and a couple of my students went through that program, and it was absolutely excellent. I kept saying to them, "I wish I would have had this exposure when I was a graduate student." So they exposed them to what's a community college like? What can you do at a community college? What's a small university, a private university like? Liberal arts university versus a Research 1 university – what's different about them? What are the expectations they would have? Deans come and speak to them, provosts, presidents. They just had the Research Office talk to them. They had people from industry and then they actually started a whole new program for training future leaders in industry, because not all science people want to be in academia.

And so that was really kind of my approach. And I can say that I probably continued to work with almost all of those graduate students on research projects. So they are very good – well, I felt like maybe I just picked good students – but they're all very good people. And actually, one of them, I've written three books with. And another two, three, I've written another book with. So they're my colleagues.

[0:30:07]

CP: Well that's my next question actually, your first book was published in 2000 – *Sport Nutrition for Health and Human Performance*. Can you tell me a bit about that experience?

MM: Well, that was, in terms of teaching graduate level nutrition, there were no textbooks, nutrition and exercise. And also, when you're teaching traditional nutrition, you tend to teach macronutrients and then micronutrients, and this was very much integrated, and we wanted it as a functional approach. So I was writing with another colleague from Stanford and she got ill and couldn't finish, and so she had taken my former doctoral student as a post-doc, and so we brought on that person – since we knew her well and we knew her writing style – to come and help us finish the book. And so that's how that book evolved. It wasn't like I necessarily planned to write a book, it just happened. And so that was the first one and then the other three were written with this graduate student.

CP: You made a decision to come back to Corvallis in 2001, what precipitated that?

MM: I think we just really wanted to move out of a big metro area to something smaller. So it wasn't particularly Corvallis that I focused on, we were just looking in the west and, of course, looking for programs that had nutrition and exercise. I interviewed different places and OSU just happened to have an opening, so it was not by any grand design, it just happened. And it worked out well, so I'm fortunate.

CP: And you were hired in as a department chair, is that correct?

MM: Hired in as a department chair when I came and then, at the time, there were interim deans, and then we got Tammy Bray, our current dean, came a year after I came. And then two or three years later, the Nutrition program was really small, they had lost a lot of faculty, and there had been a big retirement wave that had gone through the university, so lots of people had left. And so, at the time, she was the one that suggested that we combine Nutrition and Exercise, which I thought worked well, since that's my passion. And so it was at that time that I decided that I really had to pick – you're going to do administration or you're going to do the other stuff. It's really hard to keep your research program. I was really engaged nationally, trying to get nutrition and exercise professionals to talk to each other, so it was at that time I decided, "I don't think I want to be department chair anymore. We're going to merge and it's going to be myself or the other chair," and that way I could be not such a crazy person and go back to doing what I really liked. I didn't mind the administration, I think what happens is you get caught trying to do it all, and you can't. And if I ever did administration again – you just have to pick. You can do this and maybe one other thing, but you can't do everything.

CP: Many of the people I've talked to for this project have told me something very similar. Well, I'm interested in capturing a little bit of institutional memory from that specific time that you had re-arrived at OSU, because as you alluded to, the college was going through significant changes, and I'm interested in what that was like to be in the middle of all of that. The College of Home Economics was basically ceasing to exist at that point and transitioning into something similar to what exists now.

MM: I actually thought it was all really good. I knew Tim White, who had become the provost, he was a former president of the American College of Sports Medicine. I knew he was really supportive of Nutrition and Exercise. You know, I had come from ASU and it was huge. So to come to OSU, where things were so small, it seemed a little inefficient. I thought it was a good idea that they combine, I thought it was a good idea that they rethink how they did things. I thought we complimented each other, in terms of what everyone was doing. I had just seen so much transition at ASU, I guess I wasn't surprised. I think Tammy made a lot of very good changes that really improved and helped the college. I mean, we've been morphing ever since then. We were just all very busy, but I think it was all a good move.

CP: What do you remember about the role that was played by Clara Pratt during this time?

[0:34:55]

MM: Oh yeah. The one positive thing – and I'm sure many people have said this about Clara – the one real strength that she had, I thought she was a good coalition builder. I thought she did a really good job of that. She was also a real defender of just doing things rights, "let's do right by people." And I really appreciated that. "Let's do the right thing. Let's think about the right thing. Let's think about how we treat people." And so I really appreciated her standing up and voicing her opinion in that way. Because I think other people will quickly fall behind, because they feel the same way, especially if they're not used to how higher administration works in a place and they're new to it – and there was a lot of transition at that time. So I thought she was invaluable; she was a breath of fresh air, I thought. I was sorry to see her go.

CP: Well after a couple years at OSU, my notes indicate anyway, you also established a clinical professorship with OHSU, is that correct?

MM: That was partially because we were doing a – they started a Clinical Nutrition master's program and it was in that collaborative way that we set that up. Not that I've done a lot of work up there, but we did set that up and there were two or three of us that came on as collaborative clinical faculty as they started that new program. And we did some lectures back and forth, and just got that program up, and now it's running just fine. So we were trying to be collaborative with them in terms of setting up their education program.

CP: In those early years as well, you did some work on military nutrition, is that correct?

MM: Yes. I was three years on the Committee for Military Nutrition Research, which is an Institute of Medicine committee, because they're very interested in nutrition and exercise. So the committee was made up of nutrition and exercise people, as well as psychologists, because military is very interested in the whole psychological aspect. And being deprived of certain foods or being in certain stresses or environments is very psychological as well. So it was a very interesting experience, because there are particular tasks where a couple – one is, how do you make a ration that you can drop behind into refugee camps, that people can survive on when they don't have enough food, that can also withstand being dropped from a plane and not be crushed, and can be stored for so long in a certain environment, as well as be ethnically and religiously acceptable?

And then we also worked with their Special Forces and what do you have to feed people when you know that you can only carry 3,000 calories a day and you know that you're going to expend 6,000 calories a day? And then you're fighting behind enemy lines and you have to carry ammunition – what's the best way to keep these people alive? So it's very interesting, we had many interesting discussions and presentations and, I thought, produced some pretty good work.

CP: Well 2007 and 2008 were years of great productivity for you, from what I can tell anyway. You published three books during those two years, can you tell me about that experience of – well, we'll just list the titles here: *Nutrition for Life*, which has gone through two editions; *Nutrition: An Applied Approach*, it's gone through three editions; and then *The Science of Nutrition* in 2008. Can you tell me about this explosion of work?

MM: Well, it's with my former doctoral student, Janice Thompson, who is now a faculty member at Birmingham in the UK. She wanted to write a nutrition book that was in a functional format, and I said, "didn't we learn enough about not writing books, ever again, from our first book?" Because it's a ton of work. And she really wanted to write a book, and I said, "you're crazy," and finally she talked me into it. So that's kind of how it all got started.

And then once you write one, the publishers want some variation, and we kind of refused. And then they insisted and we said, "well, if we're going to do it, we need more help." And so we brought someone on to help us and it's just kind of evolved since then.

CP: So the three books are sort of a variation on the theme?

MM: Well, they're for different audiences. So *The Science of Nutrition* is for the majors, and so it's much more in-depth, and it's really written as if you're the dietician and you're speaking with clients. The *Applied* is for non-majors, so it has less metabolism and less pathways that people get afraid of. And then the last one is very much more personal nutrition. So if you take a class on campus, the 200-level, that you really just want to know, "what should I do?" It's really more written on that level, and it's much smaller, and it doesn't go into metabolism much at all.

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CP: Tell me a bit more about how these books were written collaboratively.

MM: Well, I know the authors very well, so I think that is a very positive thing; we can be constructively critical of each other and no feelings are hurt. It's like, "can you read this? Does I make any sense? Can you edit it?" and nobody feels bad. They're just doing the best thing. Or we talk about, which we do, how we should do it. So I think, in that way, it worked out very well. We divided the labor. If I'm going to be late, I don't feel any hesitation to call up and say, "look, I'm sorry, I just can't get this done. What's Plan B?" I don't feel like they're made or upset with me, because their lives are busy too. So I think, in that way, it's actually worked very well. I think one of the things is that we're all very good about trying to make deadlines. If we know we have a deadline, we try to meet it, and I know they're trying to meet it as much as I am. So it's not like they're slacking off.

So we just know each other. I mean, with one of the students, remember I had her as a doctoral student at ASU. The other one I was a colleague with at ASU from 1984. So I know their voice. You know when you read something, you hear someone's voice, you know their writing style. So it hasn't been difficult at all. I mean, it's time-consuming, but it's not difficult.

CP: What sort of work habits were you keeping to produce this amount of content in two years?

MM: Long. [laughs] Long, that's all I can say. I don't want to go beyond it. Long. It's interesting, I think anybody can write a book. It's more perseverance than anything else. You just don't want to do it on top of everything else.

CP: Around this time also, again if my notes are correct, you developed a relationship with Extension, is that correct?

MM: Yes.

CP: As a nutrition specialist. Can you tell me a bit about that?

MM: I am totally impressed, you know more about me than I know about me. [laughs] Yes, what happened, when I came as a department chair, they were transitioning Extension – like Family Community Science Extension faculty – into departments for tenure homes. So part of what I did as a new chair is go out and meet all these people and figure out who they were and what kind of work they were doing, where they needed help, and who was on a tenure track – because that would be my responsibility, to mentor them through that process. And so I spent a lot of time out in the field getting to know Extension faculty, because – it's just like any new faculty, you feel like you need to get to know your new faculty. But we had, just all of the sudden, a whole bunch of new faculty.

So I did that and I quickly found that we have really good Extension faculty in nutrition. I mean, it's just extremely fortunate. So I got to know their work and I did some collaborative research with some of them, and did some writing with some of them, so I just sort of – they got to know me and I got to know them, and we've just had a relationship ever since. So I've always done things with the Extension faculty. I believe in what they do, I think they do a good job, I enjoy being with them. And then I did go over and we needed a specialist and we hadn't been able to hire one, so I did go over and work as a specialist, for part of my job, for a couple of years as well. So then I really got to know them, because I did a lot of site visits and was trying to help and interact and do training with them. And I still do stuff with them, even though it's not really part of my job description.

CP: Work in keeping with over a century's worth of Land Grant tradition here.

MM: Oh yeah. I'm just so impressed with the faculty that we have in Extension. And it also gave me an appreciation for how hard they work. If I see them and I might say, "how are you doing?" and then I interrupt them and I say, "oh, I know how you're doing, you're kind of crazy." Because they do so many different things, and I don't think you can appreciate it until you've walked in their shoes a little bit, because they're pulled in so many different directions.

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CP: Well, I have three sort of themes of research that you've engaged in over the course of your career and I'd like to talk a little bit about what you've learned and some of the outcomes of that work. And the first is rural obesity in children.

MM: So I'm on two large obesity grants, and the GROW grant that you're referring to is in rural Oregon and other rural places in the west. And I grew up in rural America, so I'm pretty aware of what that's like. And I think there are so many different environmental issues with rural Americans – many people choose to live there, that's a choice, others it's not a choice, it's just kind of where they have grown up and they stay there. But jobs are harder in rural America, distances are longer, the food environment may not always be as good as you would like. And so I think they have to work a little harder to make sure they have healthy food on the table and also manage everything else that has to be managed. And they're a long way from nowhere. And I grew up with long way from nowhere. But I think it's just a little bit more difficult.

And their physical activity environments may not be as conducive as we think, because they may not live any place where they can go out walking on the woods. Because they're on gravel roads and its dark, and they just don't have gyms and streetlights and some of the other facilities to go to, so they have to be pretty creative in being active, unless it's just physically active because of work. So that's been a real learning curve. Working this those schools, they're small; sometimes it's difficult to go out to rural communities if you're from a university. You know, you're an outsider. That's where our Extension faculty are so good because they live and work in those communities and they have those relationships. So you have to be very sensitive to that and it's expensive and it's hard work. So I guess that's what I've learned.

CP: Something that we touched on briefly before, but nutrition and exercise for women?

MM: Well, ever since my Ph.D. program, I've done that. And I think we finished a project not too long ago where – this was in pre-menopausal, abdominally obese women, many had children. So they were young and in their working years, and there's just so many demands on them. They're trying to have full-time jobs, they're trying to exercise, they're trying to manage the household, they've got children, they have so many things going on, and for them to move their own health up as a priority is hard. So they appreciated just the opportunity to say, "for a period of time, I'm putting my health closer to the top of everything that I need to do," and then the trickle-down effect that it had on the family. I had people stop me in town, spouses even, just thanking me for the things that their wives have been through and appreciating it.

So I think that women have a lot of expectation to be a certain body size, to look a certain way, and we do crazy things for our bodies. And regardless of how thin some women are, they still think they're not thin enough. I just think there's a lot of baggage around nutrition and health with women. And I've examined them across the life cycle; I mean, from young women to older women, I've done research on all aspects of them. And it doesn't even matter when they get older. We did one study where we thought, "ok, once you get past forty, worrying about your weight every day is not going to be an issue." And we rejected that hypothesis right out; these women were still very concerned, still had poor diets, still doing things that, I would think by the time you're forty or forty-five, you wouldn't do anymore, because you know that it's not healthy and you care a little bit more about health than about what you look like. And that isn't necessarily true.

So just that women have to figure out how to take care of themselves and, in doing that, they're taking care of their families. Because if you're healthy, you're better able to care for your family than if you're sick. And also, you're behaviors get passed on, even if you don't think they do; you're kids are observing it. So just trying to practice a little bit what you preach and just say, "look, you don't have to be perfect, but you can try and do these things." And that's the same issue in rural families – how do you keep fresh fruits and vegetables? People will say, "they're expensive, if you don't cook they spoil, what if I don't have time to do all that?" How can you do it and keep it simple and manageable? And not lay another guilt trip on them because they don't do it?

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CP: And then, healthy eating for athletes.

MM: Well again, a lot of the women that I've worked with across the years have been active, and many control groups that we've had, in active control groups, we've had women who are overweight and we're trying to get them to be active. And I think the same issues hold true for active women; I mean, they want to lose weight. They want to know what to eat and when to eat, and sometimes they don't want to honor their own hunger because, "oh, do I need to eat this much?" So I think that just getting them to accept that they're active, they do need to eat, they need to be making good food choices.

Sometimes active women do get into disorder eating issues, and I've had my share of dealing with that and trying to get them in a healthy space and/or get them to appropriate counseling. Because, often times, they're attracted to our studies because they kind of want help but they don't want to say it, and it's not until we've sort of identified it and are saying, "look, I understand you have an eating issue," and talking about that. Even then I know they can no longer be a subject in my study, they may stay in the study just to participate with the group. I can't use their data, but I don't want them to feel left out or unusual.

So I think we've come a long way in terms of what we know about active women and how important it is for them to eat well, to keep their bones healthy when they're long, and to have a normal menstrual cycle and all the hormonal milieu that is healthy for women. And not move into mid-adulthood with all those eating issues. Because we had young women with the bones of old women – broken hips and femurs and other health issues that young women shouldn't have. So I think that's kind of where all that is going in terms of just helping women understand, at a very young age, it's important to keep themselves healthy.

CP: I gather that the fairly recent grant that you received – "The WAVE: Ripples for Change" – is a piece of this broader program of research, is that correct?

MM: Yeah, so this one is another obesity prevention, but this one is working with high school athletes with the idea – people say, "why are using high school athletes, if you're doing obesity prevention? They are really fit and lean." And one is, it's very difficult to reach that population, because they're invincible, because they're young. So using their interest in exercise as a way to teach them nutrition, especially young boys, they could really care less about nutrition unless you put a performance twist on it. So you take all your normal healthy eating behaviors and you just put a performance twist on it – and there are some very specific things that you do for exercise. When is it appropriate to do this? When isn't it? So just trying to teach them some good eating behaviors around activity, and also then trying to teach them about how can you be active outside a sport? Because if your sport is over in the fall, and you're not in another sport, what do you do for exercise, January through March, or until your sport starts again? So trying to talk about how important it is to stay active and fit throughout the season.

And then trying to teach them some skills that they can bring to university or bring to life after high school. Because I think that's one of the things that you really notice, kids come to college, they don't know how to feed themselves, they don't know how to make good food choices. They've only done physical activity as part of a team and now they're kind of on their own. And they don't know much about nutrition, they don't know much about time management. So just trying to develop what we would have taught in home ec years ago, and it was really pushed aside as, "we don't need to teach kids about life skills. We need to teach them the sciences and math and reading." I think it's come full circle to where we're saying, "oh, we need to teach these skills." They need to have those basic skills so that when they come to a place like OSU, or they go out to a real job somewhere, they know how to stay healthy. And we don't talk about obesity with those kids, we talk about healthy weight, how do you eat for a health weight, how do you eat to fuel for your sport, or if you're injured, what do you have to do? So when they come here, they're not worrying about, "oh, I'm going to gain the freshman fifteen, that means I have to starve myself." It's just trying to have good healthy behaviors.

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And many of them don't come from homes where they learn how to cook, and so trying to teach the basic cooking skills. How they can just read labels and be a little self-sufficient. And I think now, high schools are realizing, and it's starting to come back. Home ec classes and life skills classes are starting to come back, because they realize that kids have gone out and they don't know how to eat. And I've had college athletes living in apartments and I say to them, "do you know how to cook?" And they say, "no." "So what are you eating?" "We just buy snack food." Well, that is no way to fuel a healthy lifestyle, especially for an athlete. So just trying to teach them a few skills.

CP: Have there been opportunities to collaborate with the Athletic Department here? Or has it been more person to person?

MM: I've worked with them ever since I came, partially because I really thought they needed to have a sport dietician here. And so I was on one of the university committees for the Athletic Department, pushing, pushing, pushing. And we finally got a sport dietician here, and she left and actually came to our department as a faculty member, so then we had

a lull. And now, one of our former students is hired over there. So it's been something I've pushed. I pushed it at ASU, I pushed it here. You can't be a Pac-10 or 12 school without doing this for your athletes. And if you don't do it, eventually you will be liable for an eating disorder or something; you just have to provide your athletes with good information. One of my former master's students is also the dietician at the health center, and she's an athlete. So now the regular students can get it, even if they're just doing recreational activity.

And we really need more than one dietician in the Athletic Department. You could just have one dietician take care of the football team during the season, let alone anyone else. And also, I think one of the things that more dieticians would do is, "I'm teaching not only to eat for your sport now but for a lifetime. So I do care whether you have a health issue right now. Whether you're hypertense, or whether you're pre-diabetic, or whether you're at risk for that, I need to teach you how to eat for your sport and to eat for that health issue." So I think we were one of the last Pac-10, now Pac-12, schools to actually get a dietician. We were very slow to come to the table; I guess I didn't do a good enough job.

CP: Who are some people from OSU who have been impactful on your career?

MM: Well, if you're talking about early on, certainly the faculty members that I interacted with when I talked about Michael Maksud. Since I've come here, I think the collaborators I have on the Exercise Science and the GROW. Some of them, my collaborators, have left, because all of my students have Exercise Science faculty on their dissertation or master's thesis. So I think those individuals, we have good people here, so it's been very fortunate. We have good Exercise Science people and we have good Nutrition people.

CP: A couple of concluding questions. First is your sense of where the college is at right now. It's obviously gone through this sort of regular evolution ever since you've been here. It's recently accredited as a College of Public Health, Dean Bray is now retiring, where do you see the college as standing at this point?

MM: Well, I think that the introduction of Public Health has changed everything, because now the college has to stay accredited. We in Dietetics have an accreditation program, so we really understand, you've got to follow the metrics. You have to make sure you have certain competencies, you have to track those competencies, you have to make sure that you have them. Then you follow them through like, for our students, through a national exam and their workforce, and whether their employers think that they're competent. So I think that adds a whole layer to the college that has to be done at the level.

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I think it has put a lot of resources into the MPH side of it and now I think that those of us in other areas outside of Public Health – so Nutrition will probably eventually have a MPH program that can focus on nutrition, Exercise Science, I would love to see them combine, but you do one thing at a time. So I think that it will impact each of the areas, as we add to the MPH emphasis in the college our own area of expertise. And also, many of our undergraduate degrees in the health field are going to master's level required, so I think that's really changing – like our Athletic Training is going to that, PT's are going to doctorate PT's, nutritionists are eventually going to have to have a master's degree. So I think all of those allied healths now that are moving into needing a master's or a doctorate practice – like Pharmacy, it's a doctorate practice – will also impact our college, because we're going to have to meet those needs. So those are discussions that are going on right now. So I'm sure it will have continued to evolve just because health care is evolving and education is evolving. So, you know, everybody's putting things online; it'll be interesting to see the fallout of all that.

CP: Have you had occasion to interact much with the Linus Pauling Institute?

MM: Yes, because we have faculty in our area, and so I've been on a few committees and I team-teach with one of the faculty members there. So yes. That's another fortunate plus, I think, for OSU, is that we have people who are real interested in that, well, more the micronutrients. But now I think they're stepping back and taking on the whole diet, because I think you have to do that. People eat food, they don't eat nutrients. So what's the whole diet? And what's the context of that diet? And I think OSU is really trying to look at sustainable ag, they're really trying to be environmentally friendly, so I think our whole – College of Ag is also really interested in that.

CP: And then the last question is one that we've been asking everybody for this project, and that's just to give their sense of where the university is right now, heading into its 150th birthday, as one who has been associated with it for quite a long time now.

MM: Well, as someone who has been associated it for quite a long time, I see the growing pains. I see the growing pains, and one of the things that I really noticed when I left OSU as a student and I went to ASU, is they seem to have more money. It just seemed like they could afford more things and they weren't doing things on a shoestring always. And I hope that OSU can get to the place where they hold steady long enough that they can catch up with buildings that are falling apart, they can catch their breath long enough to figure out how do we teach this many students on this campus, versus our new campuses, versus our online? Because ASU was building new campuses when I was there, I transitioned from one campus to the next. They were starting online. OSU is kind of behind compared to some schools, but I think one thing that OSU might be doing right is being more thoughtful about their online courses and the quality, because I think you have to pay attention to quality, not just quantity.

So I sort of see somebody at some point in time saying, "ok, where do we catch up? And then, once we've caught up, where do we want to go after that?" Because you can't just keep growing, there's too many tensions, and the campus needs too much attention. I mean, I'm in one of the oldest buildings on campus and I don't know how many more times you can patch things up before someone says, "ok, we really have to think about how we're going to restructure this building to meet today's needs." So I'm not really sure. I mean, I think they'll do well if they're thoughtful. And also, OSU really has the community behind them and I think they could alienate the community if they're not careful. And I would hope that they don't turn into a bully in their own backyard.

CP: Well Melinda, I know your time is limited today, and I appreciate your carving out a little bit for us, and I really appreciate your involvement in this project. Thanks very much.

MM: Thank you.

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