



Jean Starker Roth Oral History Interviews, October 10, 2007

Title

“Building a Career”

Date

October 10, 2007

Location

Starker Roth residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

Summary

At the beginning of interview 2, Starker Roth describes the year that her family spent in State College, Pennsylvania, where her father was on sabbatical. She then turns her attention to the roots of her interest in home economics, her social life as a teenager, and the gradual development of Corvallis as a city.

At various points throughout the interview, Starker Roth reflects on her undergraduate experience at Oregon State College, noting the social frustrations that she felt while living at home and the more positive progression of her academic training in home economics.

The primary focus of the session is Starker Roth's work experiences following her graduation from OSC in 1942. In this, she speaks of her years as a teacher, Extension employee, and war support staffer, discussing the specifics of each of these jobs including her moves to multiple locations in western Oregon as dictated by changes in her employment. She likewise recounts her memories of life during wartime, including her social involvement with United Service Organizations activities, and her family's broader engagement with the war effort.

The interview concludes with Starker Roth's recollections of her four years living in Astoria and of a short period of time that she spent in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Interviewee

Jean Starker Roth

Interviewer

Maia Fischler

Website

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

Transcript

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

Maia Fischler: This is Maia Fischler, and I'm in the home of Jean Starker Roth in Corvallis. Today is October 10th, and Jean and I are going to be talking about her years in Corvallis. Today I think we're going to be focusing on your high school years, and then on into your early adulthood, your working years. But before we start talking about that time, you mentioned that you would like to tell me about a trip that you took when you were 10 that we forgot to talk about last time. Tell me about that.

Jean Starker Roth: Well, my father was a professor of forestry, as you know. We've mentioned that in my other talks. And he had sabbatical leave. And so at first the family decided -- well he decided -- that he would go east for a year, and that my mother would stay and live in the house at 320 N. 23rd and tend the nursery, which was on the corner of Harrison and 23rd Street -- where the bed and breakfast is now. So all of a sudden -- and of course as a 10-year-old-child, I wasn't aware of the family discussion about this. But all of a sudden, my mother put her foot down, I think, and when she put her foot down, not very often, then she put it down firmly. So all of a sudden, we were packing up. They made an arrangement for somebody to take care of the nursery while we were gone, and we loaded up the car. I remember the car at that time had one of those trunks that could let down and then you could either have it up and closed, or you could have it down and pack a lot of stuff. It was kind of like a built-in trailer for the car. So we had all our possessions for a year to go east for a year to State College, Pennsylvania. We had no problem driving east that I remember. They rented a house there -- no it was an apartment above a garage. Then my mother had to go to the basement, or the garage part -- she had to wash downstairs. Well apparently, there was some dissention about that, because the man who rented some other part of the building wanted to make wine in the washtubs, and she was pretty irate about that. So I remember vividly that she was very upset about the laundry situation.

Well anyway, we stayed there for a year, and I remember eating at the Nittany Lion, which is kind of like our MU, and they were very friendly with the lady who ran the food there. That's about all that I remember about that, except that my father was playing the stock market, and they would go after we had got to bed and all, they would go walking and pick up a newspaper to get the stock market report. Because in those days, there wasn't any way to get it electronically.

MF: You were probably getting it a day or two late, too.

JSR: Uh huh. The other thing about that part of the time in State College was that we often played "hearts" as a family in the evening.

MF: Were you in school there?

JSR: Yes, and everyone said, "Mrs. Starker, you must buy a heavy coat for your daughter, because it's very cold in State College." Well as it turned out, she bought me this lovely faux fur fabric coat, it was very warm, but the temperature was very warm in State College, it was a warm winter, and I don't think we ever had snow.

MF: That's very unusual. Because I don't remember if I told you that I went to school in State College, at Penn State, and I remember bitter cold winters.

JSR: Well that year they had a very warm winter, and let's see, what else was I going to tell you about that?

I don't remember -- each vacation, I think the first time my father had a vacation between terms, we went to Washington, D.C., and we saw a lot of that area. And then at Thanksgiving, or the next time, we went to New York City, and then we went to Philadelphia. We saw a lot of the country.

But the crisis was that when we started to pack up and go home, of course we had a lot of things in this trunk-thing that was part of the car, and it was very heavy in the back end. And my father did not like to drive in any what we would call paved country road, but what in those days was like a freeway. Well he liked to go on the gravel roads and see the woods, what was going on there. Well we blew a tire, and of course with the load in the back of the car, we tipped over. And I had a big cut across the back of my foot, because my foot went through the window, and my mother had a big gouge in

her head. So the country doctor that doctored her just sewed it up. And he sewed it up with hair and gravel in it. So when we got to -- I think it was Denver -- we stopped to get gas, and there was a doctor there who came over and talked to my father, and he said, "Is that your wife?" Isn't it funny, the things that kids remember? My father said yes, and he said, "I'm a doctor, and I think you should get her to a hospital. She has a bad infection." We were trying to make it home, and so anyway, she got a hold of a doctor who had doctored wounds in World War I, and he shaved her head first, and he put glycerin in it. And every morning he'd come in with a silver teaspoon and just scoop out infection.

MF: How many days later was that that you got to Denver?

JSR: I think we had stopped maybe two or three times before we got to Denver.

MF: Do you remember where you had the accident?

JSR: I have no idea. It was just somewhere out in the Midwest. Oh it was terrible. So we stayed there, and I remember my father took us out -- it must have been in Denver, they had airplanes galore and they were testing them. And my father never liked it that I screamed sometimes. And so he said, "Now you stand there and scream all you want, cause we can't hear you!"

So anyway, that was quite a trip. Then when we got home, I remember that she made a -- tied four corners of a square handkerchief and wore that on her head. It seemed to me that that was forever, but you know it wasn't really. Because she didn't have any hair, they'd trimmed quite a bit of hair around her head. But I thought that was wonderful that that man who knew how to treat wounds of that sort...

MF: How long do you suppose that trip took, driving all the way across country like that?

JSR: Well I imagine it was 10 or 12 days, because in those days there were no through roads.

MF: That must have been quite an adventure. Were there places to stay, like hotels?

JSR: We stayed in hotels, and I remember when we stayed -- I don't know if you want to put this in the book or not, but I remember when we stayed in a hotel, my brother slept on that side of the bed and I slept on the other, and my father was in the middle.

So I wanted to be sure and tell you about that before we started again.

MF: Good. I'm glad we doubled back. Well when we left off last time, you were just about to start at the new high school. You said you were in the first class at the new Corvallis High School. What did it feel like going into that new school?

JSR: Well it was really pretty spiffy. It had lockers all up and down the hallways, and it was -- the home ec room, which of course I was interested in, they had lovely sewing machines, and the kitchen was lovely to use. We thought it was pretty hoity toity!

MF: So you were already interested in home economics at that point?

JSR: Yes I think so, because I really enjoyed the sewing particularly.

MF: Was that your mother's inspiration or was there somebody else who inspired you?

JSR: Well I don't remember if we talked about this, but in those days, you hired a lady to come to the house. I think that they always kind of included me in the sewing that they were doing, so I think that's probably where I got my inspiration. And it got me new clothes -- that was pretty neat!

MF: And were you interested in the cooking end of things at that stage?

JSR: Not as much. I was interested, but not as much. My mother was a very good cook, and she cooked very -- I'd say family style, you know, she made fricasseed chicken with dumplings, and she'd make pot roast... I don't remember that we ever had any salads as such. You know everybody has a lettuce or some sort of a salad nowadays, but I don't remember

but most of our vegetables were cooked. You know I remember helping to peel vegetables, but I don't remember that we had very many salads.

MF: Yes, I think that did develop later on, that thing about eating raw vegetables.

JSR: When my husband and I were married, we always had lettuce salads, because when he was in the war on Tinian, he didn't get any greens at all, and he was just starved for lettuce. When his brother went over to Tinian, he was in the Navy, my husband was in the Air Force, they met over on Tinian, because his ship came in. And he said, "What can I bring you, brother?" And he [Kermit] said, "I want a head of lettuce." And he said he could remember just sitting down and eating the whole thing. They had a lot of spam and a lot of what he called "goat."

MF: Do you think it really was goat?

JSR: No, it was lamb, but it was pretty tough and not very flavorful.

MF: You talked about how you were involved in 4-H in your younger years. Did that continue in high school or were there other clubs that took over your time then?

JSR: I don't know, but I think I would like to tell you a little bit about the 4-H. We had a 4-H club, and the leaders of 4-H at that time were Harry Seymour, Doc Allen, and Helen Cowgill. And Harry Seymour's daughter was my 4-H leader. So we had kind of an in, all the girls. She was very good, and we made at that time dirndl aprons, they were gathered on a band, and we made crocheted potholders – those are the two things that I remember most. There were other projects, but they were kind of boring.

MF: That emphasizes again that sewing skill, and how you developed that. Was that when you were in elementary school still or was that as you got older?

JSR: Well I think we were in junior high, as I remember.

I got into journalism when I was in high school, and that carried through into college, because I was night editor of the *Barometer* in college. And I was a member of the Theta [Sigma Phi] journalism honorary society -- I can't remember what the name of that is. They combined the women and the men...

I think I was more into that sort of thing by then. Although I took all the home economics that I could in high school, because we had a teacher, Mrs. Davis, and she was wonderful, and a Miss Kaiser for foods. I remember those two teachers vividly.

MF: When we were talking last time, you said there was one particular teacher in high school who had been a big influence on you. Was that Mrs. Davis?

JSR: Yes, Mrs. Davis. Because she really was a wonderful sewing teacher.

MF: And did she encourage you to go into that field?

JSR: I don't think that we were really, I don't think we talked about that so much in those days. Of course in Corvallis, almost all the kids did go on into college -- a lot of them anyway, I would say a goodly portion of them But I can't remember that we were ever talked to about what we should do. I don't think that was ever discussed.

MF: Maybe that was done more at home. Maybe there was a sense that that was something your family ought to do.

JSR: Uh huh, and of course my father wanted me to be a secretary so that I could do his typing and his letter writing. He was a great one to write letters to the editor. In fact they had to cut him off a bit -- they only let him do three a month.

But he was a taskmaster with typing. He wanted everything correct, and if it wasn't correct, he would circle it in red and say, "Do it over!" And I hate typing to this day.

MF: But you were a writer. Did you do creative writing too, or was it just journalism?

JSR: Just journalism. I did a lot of proofreading and that sort of thing.

MF: Was there a high school newspaper?

JSR: Yes, the *High-o-Scope*. I think they still do the *High-o-Scope*.

MF: And were you an editor?

JSR: Just a contributor. But I worked quite a bit. I remember after school, we'd go into the room where they did the newspaper and we'd work at that.

MF: What other kind of activities were there for kids? You said you played some basketball.

JSR: That was more in grade school. And in junior high, we did the roller skating. I don't remember that I played any particular games in high school.

MF: I wonder if they had girls' teams?

JSR: I don't think so. I don't think there were any girls' teams in those days. I remember what I did after school. I would walk downtown to Nolan's, the department store, and up in the balcony, they had a lady who taught knitting. I would go down there and knit after school and wait for my dad. And then he would come get me and take me home. Because when he was a professor, he would leave the university and then he would go downtown and be with business people for a couple of hours every day after he got through with the university. So he was downtown anyway and he would pick me up.

MF: Did he do that because it was a long walk for you to get home?

JSR: Yes, because by that time we were living out at the end of Harrison Street, the last house out on Harrison before the dairy barns. Going west, it would be on the left-hand side of the road. Because there was nothing on Witham Hill, there were no houses there.

MF: When did you move into that house?

JSR: When I started high school. Because I was so tickled that it wasn't going to be very far to walk to high school from where we lived on 23rd... and then we moved.

MF: Did your dad build that house too?

JSR: Oh yes he did. I used to walk -- well mostly I caught a ride with my dad, if I went to school when he did. But when I was going to college from that house, boys at the dairy barn, in those days they milked the cows by hand, so they employed quite a few college boys. So I would go out, and they would often pick me up and take me to the college, because they all had cars, because they had to get out to the dairy barn.

MF: So you would just stand by the side of the road and they would pick you up? They knew you, probably.

JSR: Oh yeah, sure. I'm sure making you jump around today.

MF: That's all right, it will be easy enough to straighten out later on. So you did some knitting. What kind of things did you knit down there?

JSR: Well I knit mostly sweaters, but in those days, skirts and blouses were very popular to be knit. And I remember I made a red outfit, it was a red skirt and a red sweater, and then I made my mother a bouclé --it's kind of a twisty thread -- I made her a blue skirt and jacket. I knit a lot. I would knit on Sundays because I had to stay home. All my friends were going to the movies, and I couldn't go to the movies because it cost a quarter.

MF: And your dad was saving that money for buying acreage?

JSR: Uh huh. So I could never go to the movies on Sundays, so I knit a lot on Sundays.

MF: And did you feel like you were kind of remote from your friends when you moved out to that house?

JSR: Yes it did. One of my friends lived at the corner of 30th and Harrison, but that was as close as anyone was. When I went to high school, it was kind of interesting. One of the girls lived on the corner -- that house is still there. What's that street that Harding School is on? Must be 31st, and at the corner of 31st and the street that goes behind Harding. The farmhouse is still there. Her name was Jeannette Benefield, and she was the youngest child of much older people in the family. She had older sisters, and she lived there. And Genevieve lived on 30th and Harrison, Betty Ann lived on -- I think she lived on 31st too. Her father was employed at the university in the poultry department. And of course Jeannette lived on the farm. It was all farmland there behind Harding School. And I remember her mother used to make us maple bars. Then there was another girl who lived on Arnold Way. And we all rode our bicycles. And when we lived on 23rd Street, they would ride down Van Buren and they'd stand there and whistle and I'd come out and ride the rest of the way with them to high school. And then when they came home, if we thought Mrs. Benefield had any maple bars, we'd go home that way.

MF: So you were still riding your bike a lot when you were in high school?

JSR: Uh huh.

When we get done with this visit, I want to take you down the hall, I forgot this when we were talking about going to Pennsylvania. My mother bought me a cross stitch thing that says "Where we live is home, our feet may leave but our hearts..." Anyway, I did it in cross stitch when I was in Pennsylvania. And I still have it framed.

MF: As you were telling that story I was thinking that's an awful long time to be on the road. What did you do on the drive over there? Were you working on knitting and that sort of thing?

JSR: No, I think we played games. Finding license plates and that sort of thing. I don't remember doing anything in the car.

MF: So you were living out at the end of Harrison but you still had your buddies close by?

JSR: Well there were no houses. Our house was the only one in that 32 acres that they called Cedarhurst. It's Harrison, Van Buren and Jackson. And it goes through to the sheep barns. And there was no other house in that whole area. I remember my husband used to hunt pheasants there.

MF: How long did it take before that area was developed?

JSR: Just a house at a time. My father built three of them -- he built the last one out and the one next door, which has myrtlewood floors, and then the next one. And he supervised the building of quite a few of the other ones. If people wanted to build a house, why he'd make sure that it was built correctly.

MF: So were you starting to date, to go out with boys during those high school years?

JSR: Nope.

MF: Was it not allowed?

JSR: Well I don't know that it was not allowed, but I was taller than any boy in the class. I always thought that was why. But my friends didn't really date, the group that I went with.

MF: Did you have friends who were boys, or did you just hang out with your girl friends?

JSR: Mostly just hung out with the girls. My brother had a boy friend, Fred McMillan. They used to sit out on the back porch and talk pig-Latin so I didn't know what they were talking about. But he never really had any other boy friends, I don't think, just Fred and he would hang out together.

MF: So he didn't really give you any entrée into that world of boys.

JSR: No. In fact I really didn't date until I was through college. Just – I don't know why, just didn't.

MF: Were there rules around your house for how late you could go out?

JSR: Oh yeah, they frowned upon it.

MF: Going out in the evening?

JSR: Yes. And I think that's maybe why, because I suppose looking back on it, if I was asked out, I'd probably say I can't do that.

MF: Do you feel like your family was stricter than other people's?

JSR: I think so. My dad in particular was very strict. And you see my brother didn't go out with girls either, because he was more interested in reading the encyclopedia, and he didn't do anything that was social particularly. I was more social minded, but couldn't do a lot of the things that I wanted to do. And my dad was one who wanted everybody up at 7:00, and he wanted them in bed by 10. And I can remember I would have my school work all laid out on the dining room table, and he'd come through the dining room, and he'd come through and say, "It's 10:00, gather that stuff up, we're all going to bed."

MF: So he ran a tight ship. Were you OK with that kind of rules?

JSR: Well I'm sure that I was very ... but I didn't dare show it.

MF: You never got into trouble by breaking rules?

JSR: No, I don't think I ever did.

MF: Do you think your family relationship changed at all as you got older? Did you get a little more responsibility and respect from your parents?

JSR: Well I think that when I left for Astoria, that's when my life changed. That was two years after college. Because I taught school on the McKenzie. But I came home every weekend, practically, because it was during the war, and as school teachers, we had C-coupons that gave you unlimited gas. We lived when I was teaching school up the McKenzie... Oh we need to put in something about living at Sparks Ranch. Oh my.

When I was hired to teach up the McKenzie, one of the criteria was that you had to have a car. So my dad bought me a – well I don't remember exactly what it was. But when I came down from the McKenzie one time, it was a second-hand car, the man that sold it to him had put – there was a black inner tube in them in those days. And he had used three strips of red on that tire – no wonder it blew! So I had three flat tires coming down from the McKenzie.

MF: Did you change them yourself?

JSR: I think probably, you know, a young girl, somebody stopped to help me. So my mother said, "Thurman, I think we need to buy Jean a different car." So they bought me a new Plymouth coupe. The license plate was 250. I wish I had that now!

So I drove that back and forth up the McKenzie. I asked the superintendent where I should live, and he said Sparks Ranch had a boarding house. So I thought, "Well that's OK." So I went and told him that I would like to live there. Well it turned out I was the only lady in the place. We had telephone linemen. We had one man who was a bookkeeper for one of the service stations. There were other men too. Well there were no locks on the doors, so I would sleep with a chair under the door knob. And they were out working, and they would hang their flannel underwear. These rooms were around a circular area in the middle of the house, and they would hang a clothes line and put their stinking wool underwear out there. And they just loved to tease me. I remember one time I was a little late for dinner, and they had put Tabasco sauce

on my mashed potatoes! And then the janitor at the school used to tease me. So one time I opened up my napkin and there was a mouse in it. They were waiting for me to scream!

MF: And did you do it?

JSR: I suppose I did! I guess I used to scream a lot when I was that age.

MF: So you ended up in home economics because you loved sewing, but was that what you always wanted to do?

JSR: Yes. I was a terrible student those first two years of college, and I think my father thought there was no point in sending a girl to college who wasn't making very good grades. Because I was in a chemistry class with all the pre-med students, and I hated chemistry. And the classes were tough. But then when I got into the home economics part, and then I really blossomed and I got real good grades. And I remember the last term in college, I got straight As, and I thought that was pretty good.

I really got along just fine. But in those days, Dean Milam was the dean, and there were three courses you could take in home economics: A, B, or C. A was education, and I can't remember what B was, but C was... I don't know what they called that but you couldn't do much if you took curriculum C. And Dean Milam had no use for anyone who wasn't taking A, and that was education. You were supposed to take home economics and be a home economics teacher. So when I graduated, I got this job up the McKenzie. I really didn't like it because I hated the discipline of the kids. I was also in charge of the school lunch program. I taught – I had to teach history, the first period of the school day. And then I had free time to do the school lunch program. I planned the menus, and made the grocery list, and worked with the two cooks who worked in the kitchen, and made sure they were cooking things that were supposed to be... helping them with that. And we served about 150 youngsters. And we got our groceries from Creswell, and if I forgot something, too bad, 40 miles to the grocery store. We had uniformed school bus drivers. One went upriver and one went downriver. And on Mondays they went to the grocery store. I gave them my list and they went and shopped.

MF: So you started out teaching history, and then you'd do the lunch programs, and then you'd teach home ec?

JSR: Yes, and I had three periods of home economics. So I really enjoyed that. I did enjoy the teaching, but not the discipline of the kids. The children that were enrolled in McKenzie high school were either from very affluent parents who were living up the river while their fathers worked in Eugene, or else they were Oklahoma people who had come out to work in the woods during the war. We had all the two phases. The principal, when he would discipline the boys, would have them go out and mow the lawn. And of course you could see it from inside, so everyone would know they had been in trouble. Would that be anything you could do nowadays? That would be corporal punishment or something.

Well anyway, getting back to Sparks Ranch. I lived there for, I guess, the first year. No, it was only part of the first year, because in the middle of that year, they hired another female teacher at the high school. And that girl was red-haired and wild. I never associated with anybody like she was. She didn't last very long -- they fired her. The first year, toward the end of the school year – no, scratch that – she got fired and left, and I guess it was then that the Kindergarten teacher said, "Why don't you come and live with me, because my husband lives down in Eugene and I go home on the weekends." So she said, "You could either be alone or else... you go home a lot too." Anyway, we worked it out, so we lived in the lovely cottages along the river. We could fish out of our back porch, it was very nice. During that winter the second year, the grade school burned. I had been home, and somehow, I'll never know, the heat for that cabin was a stove, and it had lids so you could cook on it. And somehow I had the sense to call over to the landlord and ask if I could build a fire there, because it had been very cold. And so I did and it blew up because the coils were frozen. So we had soot all over everything. So I was just really worried that my roommate would come home. They had closed the high school so I wasn't teaching that day. So when my roommate came home, I looked at her and saw that she had soot all over her face. So I said, "What happened to you?" And she said the grade school burned. So there I was, full of soot, and she was the same way.

MF: So it was during the day when kids were at the school! Do you know how it started?

JSR: I don't know, but it burned to the ground. Because they had been sorting books to see what they could save, and so she was just a mess. And I said, "Well, it's a mess here too, and we have to move over to the cottage next door. We'll have to move out of here." So that was quite an experience up there.

I finished out that year, and then Azalea Sager was in charge of the Extension Service here at Oregon State. She called me and asked if I would fill in in Lane County and do food preservation.

MF: I'm going to stop you there because I know that's a whole other part of your story, and I want to back up a bit and catch some details on some of the things you've just talked about. When you were talking about teaching high school, were there boys in the home ec classes then?

JSR: Yes, I had one whole section of boys.

MF: And you were teaching them to cook and sew?

JSR: Yes. And that school was something else again. It was on Weyerhaeuser property, and their taxes funded that school. We had beautiful sewing machines, and four-unit kitchens. It was unheard of in that day and age, because most of them just had stoves, but these were actually kitchens. I usually assigned four girls to each unit, so you could have sixteen students in one class. It was really a first-class school.

MF: I'm surprised to hear they had both boys and girls in those classes.

JSR: Yes they did, and the gymnasium was all finished in knotty pine. Oh it was a gorgeous school. It's still there and has enlarged, they have a band room now. It's quite large. It was just one long colonial school when I taught there. Then after the school burned, I forgot to put that in, they put the grade-school children in the high school, and then I had 300 kids for the school lunch. That was quite a challenge!

MF: And you taught other classes as well. How were you equipped to teach history?

JSR: Well I wasn't! And I had them buy – well I suppose the school did – buy a little newspaper that was published by somebody somewhere about current events, and we did a lot of current events studying. But I'd just have them read the book and I'd test them. I think I was just a lousy history teacher.

MF: What kind of things were you teaching in home economics?

JSR: Well we taught them budgeting. And the kids who were affluent had no interest in that, but I was trying to teach some of these kids who had come from Oklahoma how to make meals that were not only good for them but that they could afford. We taught them how to do hamburgers a hundred and one ways, and how to cook beans, that sort of thing.

MF: And the sewing skills that they were taking away were probably very useful too.

JSR: That's right, and they made little things for themselves, which was more interesting for them than doing aprons and that kind of thing. They were simple. We taught them how to use patterns, and of course it was before machines had any zigzags, they just stitched, but they could do a lot of things. They did a really good job. And then we'd have little teas for the mothers, and that taught them how to entertain, and then they would model their clothes.

MF: So this was during the war years. Was there rationing at that time?

JSR: Oh yes, and that's what I did as a war foods assistant when I went to Astoria. I taught the women how to use their ration points because they couldn't afford the tender cuts of meat, they cost too many ration points. I remember we had one lesson on cooking less tender cuts of meat. And that was also the first time we had pressure saucepans.

MF: Pressure cookers allow you to cook something for a long time?

JSR: Well you could cook things for a short time but it would tenderize them with steam.

MF: So the community really had the need for that kind of learning.

JSR: Well there weren't any men to repair things. So we taught them how to repair an iron chord or replace light bulbs. These women didn't know, the men had always done that stuff. But I never told my husband that I did that!

MF: So in that community, the meals you were making at lunchtime were probably the main meal for some of those students.

JSR: For some of them. I think it was really interesting. I had a mentor up there – there was a husband and wife who taught at the school, and they really gave me a lot of pointers about teaching and what the kids would like. I used to do things with them. Because we had gas, so we could go places. We usually went to Eugene one night a week for a movie or some sort of entertainment. They gave me some pointers for how to handle the kids. Cause I don't remember, we took psychology and that sort of thing in college, but it wasn't the basics of what you do when a kid does this or that. So they were very helpful. And we had a very helpful superintendent too. He was very understanding.

The one thing about teaching up there was that we all lived downriver, and so we wanted to do other things with our gas, so we would carpool, so we all rode to school, the superintendent, the couple and myself, all rode to school together. So we would discuss things.

MF: Why did they give you special gas privileges?

JSR: Well we couldn't get to school otherwise. We probably lived 20 miles from the school. So we were given C-coupons.

MF: Well we skipped entirely over your college years. Can we go back to that a little bit?

JSR: Yes. I don't remember much about my college years except that I think I hated them.

MF: Why was that?

JSR: Because I lived at home. I had really no social life -- my dad wouldn't let me join a sorority. I went out for rush, and when it came time to be pledged, I had a horrible cold. And he didn't think I should join a sorority. My brother had joined a fraternity and he didn't get anything out of it, so therefore I wasn't going to get anything out of a sorority.

MF: Oh, that must have made you mad.

JSR: It did. And I resent that to this day. And I resent that I had to live at home, because that's where you make your lifetime friends. I only lived in the dormitory one term, because I said to my father, this is the term I'm going to do my student teaching, and I am going to be required to not go to bed at 10:00. I need to stay up and I need to do things at the school, and you aren't going to like it when I'm not right on schedule. So they let me live in the dorm that one term, and that's when I made a lot of my friends. I still have a friend who lives over here on Walnut -- we went to college together. Those are lifetime friends you make in college. So when it came time for my kids to go to college, and we lived in Corvallis, I said, "You're out of here. This is the time for you to be with your friends." I think that they've always appreciated that. It was wrong wrong wrong for me to live at home.

MF: It probably didn't feel like you'd changed that much from your high school years.

JSR: That's right. I went to school with my father, I went down and – I guess in college I knitted too – but it was just do this and this.

MF: So you didn't have any social times?

JSR: No. It was a rotten college experience.

MF: Did you ever wish you could go to a different college all together, that your dad wasn't so closely associated with?

JSR: Well I don't know if I was ever really revolting, but I just wasn't very happy in those years.

MF: So you didn't ever think about going to become a Duck or anything crazy like that?

JSR: Oh no, no, I couldn't, you know. And I remember standing at my father's desk when it was time to get the check for tuition, and he would look at that check, \$25 for my tuition, and he would say, "Now that's a lot of money." Like, you better get something out of this.

MF: But you worked as a night editor on the *Barometer*. That kept you out late!

JSR: Yes, that helped a lot. And those kids are dead now, and I knew them up till a few years ago, I kept with them.

MF: How many years did you do that?

JSR: Two, I think, as a junior and senior.

MF: Did you tell me you had a minor degree in journalism?

JSR: Well I'm not sure if it was a minor, but it was enough to join the honor society.

MF: Did you ever think about going to work in journalism?

JSR: No, I don't think I ever did. Because you were supposed to teach school from home economics. But I loved my experience with the Extension Service, I really enjoyed that.

MF: Well, I'll let you jump ahead to that again then, I'm sorry to have to make you detour back a little bit, but I didn't want to miss that entire phase of your life.

JSR: I guess I keep going on because I like to talk about what was happy in my life.

MF: Yes. You were going to tell me about the woman who gave you your entrée to that world.

JSR: Azalea. Yes, she called me and asked me if I would come and work in Lane County and do this food preservation. You see, in those days the women – do you understand how the Extension Service works?

MF: Not well.

JSR: Well, you're a county agent and you have an office, and what happens is you have groups of women in communities around the county. Like you'd have one here in Philomath, and maybe in Monmouth, just a group of people around the area. In Astoria, we had Astoria, Jewell, Seaside, then all down the Columbia River. There were 13 groups in Astoria. Anyway, getting back to how I happened to get there. She called me and wanted to know if I would do this and I said yes I would, I was anxious for a job. But we have to go back to my experience at Camp Adair, because I did that before.

MF: OK, we'll switch it around later.

JSR: I don't want to forget that cause that was quite an experience. So she called me and asked me if I would do that. And I said sure, I wanted a job and that would be fine. And it was the summer before that that I did the Adair business. So then about half way through the summer, she called me and said we have an opening for a war food assistant in Clatsop County, and would I be interested in doing that. And I said I would be, but I had signed a contract with the school system for the next year. And she said, "Well do you think you can get out of that?" And I said, "I don't know, I'll ask." And she said, "Well, we'd like to have you do that if you can". So I went to my superintendent, and he said, "I wouldn't hold you back, because that's a better job." So that's how I happened to go to Astoria.

Meanwhile, I'd been offered a job in El Waco, Washington, and so I thought, "Well, I guess I'd better check both of them out and see what I'd rather do." Well when I got up to El Waco, I found out that the ferry – there was no bridge then – and the ferry stopped at 6:00. And I thought, "Oh, if I want to come home or do something on this side of the river, that's going to be a little problem. So I think I'd better take the Astoria job."

So then – do you want me to go back and talk about Camp Adair? Well the first summer when I was teaching up the McKenzie, I came home and went up to Camp Adair to see if I could get a job. And when they found out I was a home economist and knew something about food, they were just delighted, because they had had somebody there who was –

all the menus were made out in Utah someplace, the Ninth Corps Area – so they had somebody who didn't know a thing about us. And I think there must have been stew on the menu, and they had bay leaves in the stew, and they ordered a trainload, a whole car full of bay leaves. So anyway, they thought it would be nice if somebody knew something about cooking. So anyway, the menus were all made out in Utah, so what I was assigned to do was to change the menus so that we could use northwest products. So instead of okra, we had corn on the cob. So I did that all that summer, and that was fun. Because those guys were a lot of fun to work with, they were mostly all men in the department where I was, and there were two divisions of military out there. So it was a fun job and I really enjoyed that.

MF: So how many men do you think you were serving out there?

JSR: Well I just did the menus. There was another man that was supposed to order the food, and he would confer with me about how much we needed. I had no idea how to order for two divisions of men. Maybe in the thousands. I don't know how I calculated that but they loved me so I guess I did OK!

MF: So you were right out there where Adair is now, at the officer's club?

JSR: Oh yes.

MF: Would you drive out every day and work on the menu?

JSR: Yes.

MF: Was it a seven-day a week job?

JSR: No, I think we just worked five days. We went to the USO in the evening and danced.

MF: Was that out there at the base?

JSR: Sometimes at the base, and sometime, there was USO in what's now the mayor's office.

MF: Downtown? Where is the mayor's office?

JSR: It's up the street from the Whiteside Theater. It's an old church that's been made into the municipal building. That was the USO, and we danced there.

MF: This is the first I've heard about you having a social life. Is this when things started to pick up?

JSR: Yes, they picked up tremendously then.

MF: You were surrounded by thousands of men.

JSR: Yes! That was fun, I enjoyed that.

MF: What kind of music were people listening to then?

JSR: Oh, Glen Miller, big bands.

MF: Would they have actual bands there?

JSR: Mostly canned music, but sometimes there would be a band. But you know, all of the guys were in the service, and unless they were a group that formed at Camp Adair, I think it was mostly canned music.

And I had an awfully good time in Astoria too, because that's where they made the boats that were made to open up in the front, so when they were making landings... Landing craft -- LL something, I can't remember, but they were all made in the shipyards in Portland So when the kids came to Astoria to get on the boats, they didn't know if they were going to see land again. And some of those kids were so homesick, my heart just went out to them. It was a sad time in a way.

MF: Were they from all over the country?

JSR: Oh yes, and the favorite thing at the dances was to guess where they were from from their accents.

MF: So I imagine this town must have been busting at the seams with all those guys here.

JSR: Oh yes, it was very busy busy busy.

MF: So they were coming down from the camp and going into town for their social things?

JSR: Yes.

MF: And what else was there in town, besides the USO – were there other social activities here?

JSR: Well I can't remember anything besides the USO.

MF: Probably they didn't let everyone out at once.

JSR: No, they didn't. They were kept busy.

MF: I imagine the girls in town were kept busy too!

JSR: Oh yes. And you know, I used to wear three-inch heels and demonstrate all day, and then I'd dance all night. I don't know how I did it! I bet we did that three times a week. There were buses running back and forth from camp.

When I was working at Camp Adair, mostly I danced at the USO. There were a lot of the girls who dated officers, and they would go out to the officers' club. But I don't know why I wasn't connected. And some of my friends married those officers that they met during that time. But I don't know, I didn't seem to... I guess where I was in the menu department, they were mostly the enlisted men, so I met more of the enlisted men than I did officers. It was fun, we had a good time.

MF: But you were living at home at that time – didn't your parents mind you going out?

JSR: I was through college by then, and I think that they realized they had to loosen up a little bit. And oftentimes my mother was down there serving food, refreshments at the USO, so she was keeping an eye on me.

MF: So was the whole community involved in supporting the war effort?

JSR: Oh yes. And then my folks had a room that they'd built on in that house for my grandfather, and then he passed away, and they rented it out to a lady who was married to a man who was out there. She was very nice, we kept in touch with her for a long time. Everyone in Corvallis opened up their homes to the people that needed help. Cause there weren't any – well there was the Benton Hotel, and the Julian Hotel. I don't think there were any motels in those days.

MF: So the wives who wanted to come and be close to their men...

JSR: There was no place for them to live.

MF: So people would rent out rooms for them. Were there other ways that this community was tapped in to the war effort?

JSR: Well my dad was on the draft board. You had to go over – everybody had to sign up, you know, the boys had to sign up when they were – was it 18? Then he would go over the papers and have to decide who would go and who was 4-F. But I don't know – the town of course was just jumping, because of all the people. That's what changed Corvallis tremendously was when those two divisions moved in here. And you know, a lot of those people came back and retired here. We used to have three retired colonels on our street over there on Jackson. In spite of the poison oak – they all got poison oak out there. And in spite of that, they came back, cause they liked Corvallis.

MF: Yes, we think of all the troops, the young guys who were here, but there were probably a lot of family men too.

JSR: Yes of course. So the wives wanted to be as close as possible. And sometimes they would come until their husbands left for overseas, and then they'd leave. And some of them just stayed because they thought it was a nice place to be. And if they could get a job... you know that was kind of the beginning of women working. Because they worked in the shipyards, and they worked where they could to support their husbands while they were gone to war. That was the period of time when women started to do different things.

MF: Did you have the sense that a lot of men had to leave their businesses here, and did that open up opportunities for women?

JSR: Oh yes. And a lot of them lost their businesses, because they had to go to war. If they were a one-man business, particularly, they just had to shut it up and leave.

MF: I think about the forestry business that was so male dominated. What did those businesses do?

JSR: Well I think they just let the trees grow. I don't think they did much logging or anything during the war years, cause there wasn't anyone to work in the woods. Unless you could get somebody who was 4-F.

MF: They must have needed a lot of wood for the war effort – a lot of lumber.

JSR: I don't know, I hadn't really thought about that myself. My brother went – he was in the Coast Guard. He put to work all of those Boy Scout manuals that he used to sit out on the middle of the lake to read!

MF: He was already out of college at that time?

JSR: Yes, cause he was two years older than I. So he went to the Coast Guard in Connecticut, was it? He was a 90-day wonder, as they called it, cause it took him just 90 days to be educated to be a Coast Guard. He had a boat that was – I want to say 84 feet – I think there were four crew people on it. He took that from New Haven Connecticut, and he took that boat into New York harbor and all the way into Rio de Janeiro. It was boat that had – I want to say balloons – on the back of it. They were sub chasers, and there were a lot of German subs off the coast of South America. And he wrote home one time and said, "When life gets boring, we pull our balloons up closer to the boat." My mother had a fit!

MF: Was your family very worried about him?

JSR: Oh yes, my folks were very worried.

MF: But he stayed in contact, anyway, he was never totally out of communications?

JSR: Oh yes. And I don't think that he ever had any conflicts down there, they were just patrolling to keep the Germans from landing in South America. And I don't know what they pulled behind the boat, I don't think it was a balloon.

MF: We can go back up to Astoria now if you'd like.

JSR: Astoria. Well I told you that Azalea offered me this job up there as a war food assistant, which led the next year – that was a one-year... the government had funded that particular project for one year, to help women who were alone and needed help living on their own while their spouses were away at war. It was mostly teaching them how to use things that were available, like cooking the meat and using the pressure sauce pans, which had been just invented. We taught them how to repair electrical appliances, we taught them how to clean sewing machines, we did one about curtains and decorating your house, because some of them wanted to do that. They chose what they really wanted to do, there was a variety of things offered, and then each unit chose what they wanted to do.

MF: So these were existing units of women?

JSR: No, I started them. They had no Extension Service in the home economics department. You see Extension Service is made up of county agents who are ag people, and then they had 4-H agents who helped the kids, and then they had the women who helped the ladies. And I was in charge of the ladies, and I started out by asking the county agents who were the movers and shakers in the community, and I went to those ladies and asked, "Would you like to establish a program?"

And they were called the county committee, and they were the nucleus. They would go out to their communities and tell them that this was available to them and they'd schedule a meeting. So that's kind of the way it worked.

MF: Sounds very practical.

JSR: Yes it was. And I also helped the 4-H agents a lot, because if the girls wanted to do canning or sewing or something, the guys didn't know much about that. They could organize the club and all, but I would go out and help them with their projects. And we did the county fair, that was all part of our job. We did do some judging but we got the fair building ready. I remember I swept down cobwebs, and we kind of managed the program. But that was kind of mutual, all three agents did that. Some counties had more agents, like they might have somebody in a community where they raised a lot of filberts, they might have a filbert specialist. Hood River, I think, had a cherry specialist. It depended on what they wanted.

MF: But your job was primarily helping women who were alone because of the war, helping them manage their households. Did you get a sense of the mood of the country at that point? Did it feel like people were very supportive of the war effort and willing to make sacrifices?

JSR: Oh World War II had much support, it's not like this at all. They were behind it 100% and did a lot of fundraising for the service men, and everybody was behind that effort. Not like it is now at all.

We had coffee coupons, we had shoe coupons, we had food coupons, we had all these things that were not available. To keep people from buying up things in bunches, you had to have a coupon to go buy them.

MF: And generally people were good tempered about that?

JSR: Yes. I think that everybody was pretty... But they would trade. For instance, I didn't drink coffee, so I would trade for shoe coupons.

MF: Was there a sense of fun about it?

JSR: Oh yeah, absolutely!

MF: Where were you living when you were there in Astoria?

JSR: Well, I lived first in an apartment, which was up on a hill. Then there was a man who ran the seafood laboratory, which is still there in Astoria, and he had an old Victorian house with an apartment in the rear. And they had two children and so I lived in there. And they would ask me to baby-sit every once in a while, which didn't bother me any. Those little girls were awfully sweet.

MF: So that was your first experience with living on your own?

JSR: Well that was the second place I lived. I lived in the Grand Apartments, which were far from grand. But I lived along there for a while, and then I lived -- the USO director was having trouble finding a place to live, and I lived with her for quite a while. We slept together, it was a cozy affair! It was a let-down bed and a kitchen and a bathroom -- that was it! But she worked at night and I worked in the daytime, so it worked. And then we had an icebox, and I remember she'd come in late at night and say "Did you take the kitty out?" And that meant had I dumped the ice water out from under the refrigerator. Cause otherwise we'd have water all over the floor.

MF: So that must have been pretty exciting to finally get away from home.

JSR: Oh yes it was, I really enjoyed my time. And this Grand apartment was just a block from my future sister-in-law's grandmother. And so I had friends there, it was really nice. She was a great lady, she was just wonderful. Would you like to hear about my arrival in Astoria?

When I knew that I was going up there, I had to go up to get ready for the fair. And then the next thing that I had to do was to come back down and go to the state fair, because in those days the Extension agents did all the judging at the state fair. So I made a reservation to go to the Astor Hotel, because I didn't know of any other place to live -- that was the only

hotel I knew about. Well I went and I checked in and the whole lobby was full of sailors. And so I went up to the desk and I said, "I have a reservation," and this man looked me up and down and up and down, and then he said, "You will stay one night and one night only." And I said, "Why is that?" We just don't want you here." And I said, "Well I had a reservation." And he said, "One night." Well I wasn't the kind of girl that they wanted at that hotel, they wanted girls who would be happy with the sailors, I found out afterwards.

So I went up to my room and I cried and I cried, I thought, "What am I going to do? I'm going to get fired from this job before I even start it." So I called Grandma Ball. And I said, "I don't know what to do." And she said, "I know that man. You just come right up here and I will call him." So I didn't even check out, I just left, I got a taxi, went up to her house. So I thought, what am I going to do tomorrow when I go to work and I tell them I couldn't stay? But Grandma Ball said I could stay the week. So anyway, I went in, and Don Jose was the county agent, and he just roared. He said, "That man has been begging me to have Extension people stay at his hotel. Wait till I tell him he kicked one out!" So that worked out just fine.

MF: So eventually you did get to stay there?

JSR: Oh I didn't go back. I stayed with Grandma Ball.

So then she found me an apartment while I was gone to the state fair, and I came back and moved into the apartment. But I was just devastated. And of course at the time, I was so naïve, I didn't know why I'd been kicked out. And one of the bellboys was really nice, he said, "I'm sorry for this situation." And he was the one who told me, "Don't check out. We'll cover for you." But he knew what was going on. But I didn't know what was going on.

MF: And what was your relationship to Grandma Ball?

JSR: My brother married her granddaughter. They weren't married at the time, but they were dating -- it was a pretty sure thing. So anyway, that was quite an experience for an arrival at a new job.

So then I went down and did the fair, and then came down to the state fair, and then came down to Corvallis, because that was when they had their yearly meetings of the Extension Service, so I was home then for a week. And then I went back up and started my job.

MF: And you ended up being in Astoria for...

JSR: Four years. The war food assistant for one year and then three years as an Extension agent, because... you see Extension is paid for by federal funds, county fairs, county funds, and state funds. And the county decided that they wanted to have an agent, so they put up their portion of the money and got the money from the state. So that worked out well, and they still have an agent in that county.

MF: How was the home demonstration agent job different from what you had been doing?

JSR: Well, not very much different really, except that I did more things. The war was gradually over, and we did more things that weren't particularly war related. We branched out and did a lot of things.

MF: You didn't have to work so much with how to make your coupons stretch.

JSR: No. They had state people here under Azalea, and they were the ones who planned a variety of programs and saw the needs in the counties. Then we would take those ideas back to our county committee, and they would decide which programs they wanted to hear during the year. And you would meet once a month with each unit, and when I quit I had 13 units. So that was pretty good.

MF: I read somewhere that you went down to Berkeley – my notes say 1945.

JSR: I wonder if I went down there one summer when I left the Extension Service, if they gave me time off... What happened was there was a lady over in Salem who was in charge of distributing education. I don't know if you know what that is, but it's how things are distributed, after they're made, and about selling in stores. At one time I thought I'd like to

work in a department store as a manager or something like that. This lady talked me into going, and it was during the war because my brother was at Treasure Island. I'd have to go back, I just don't remember what year that was. Cause he was at Treasure Island and that was before he went to Brazil. Anyway, this lady over in Salem said she wanted me to go there and she was going to hire me when I came back. So I went down there, and my aunt and uncle lived in San Francisco, and my brother was living on Treasure Island. Where did I live? Boy I'm blank on that, I can't remember where I lived! I didn't live with my aunt and uncle, but they entertained us a lot, during the Saturday and Sunday, we would go to my aunt's. She managed a very nice apartment house with a doorman on California Street. My brother and I would go there and spend the weekend with them. I'm drawing a blank, I'm going to have think about that and see if I can conjure up any thoughts about that. Oh, I know, I stayed at a sorority house. Oh, and that was an interesting comment too, because we had houseboys. Sororities in those days had houseboys who served the food and things like that. And I met some ladies from Eugene who were also staying there, they weren't doing class work but they were there. It was the year they dropped the bomb. And I remember going out back and he was sitting there on the back step of the sorority house and he had his – I can still see that boy sitting there and he looked so devastated, and he said, "I'm taking physics, and now I won't have any course to take." And I looked at him and I said, "Do you realize this is probably just beginning?" And he looked at me and he said, "Do you really think so?" He said "They've discovered the bomb, I don't have anything left to do!" I thought, "That boy's not going to go very far!" I still remember that boy, he was just so devastated.

MF: So you were in San Francisco when they dropped the bomb. There's such a big Asian community there. Did you feel closer to it?

JSR: I don't remember that my brother was involved in that at all, but we were there when that happened.

MF: Do you remember how other people were reacting to that?

JSR: Well the communication was not instant like it is now. I think it took quite a few days to kind of trickle in to what had actually happened. I don't remember that it was just like that, like it is today. It took a while to figure that all out.

MF: Can you remember big celebrations when the war with Germany was over?

JSR: Oh yes. I was here in Corvallis, but of course I didn't get to go downtown, there were too many people.

MF: You didn't get to have any fun!

JSR: No I didn't! And I hate to put that in that book, but it was actually pretty true!

MF: You probably didn't complain too much at the time.

JSR: No, I really didn't. I thought it was just my lot in life, I guess.

MF: But there were big goings-on downtown?

JSR: Oh yes.

MF: One last thing that relates to your going down to Berkeley was whether you ever considered going on for further education?

JSR: No, I don't think I ever did, because you see then I went to – '45— I'm trying to think now -- I graduated in '42, and in '45 I went to Astoria. '45, '46, '47, '48, and I was married in '48, so how does that all play out? I guess we've pretty well filled in all those years there.

MF: As you were working, did you see yourself as a career gal who would go on?

JSR: No, I think I really wanted to be married and have a family.

MF: That had always been your vision? And work was kind of a wayside on your way to getting there. Well good, we'll save that next step in your life for next time. We'll start fresh with when you met Kermit and talk about raising a family...

JSR: Oh, that's quite a story, how I met Kermit.

MF: Good, well save it for me for next week, or whenever we get together next.

JSR: OK.