



Russ Youmans Oral History Interview, May 7, 2015

Title

“Connecting the Academy with Rural Communities”

Date

May 7, 2015

Location

Youmans residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

Summary

In the interview, Youmans discusses his upbringing in east central Illinois, providing details on his family background, his education, and the important role played by the family farm. He then remarks on his transition to university studies at the University of Illinois, making mention of his involvement in Navy ROTC, fraternity life, 4-H, and the track team. Youmans next recalls his commission into the United States Navy, his decision to return to academia, and his master's and doctoral studies at Purdue University, a period that included two years living in Brazil.

From there, Youmans describes his move to Oregon State University, his work with the Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission, and colleagues at Oregon State who were engaging with rural community issues during this time.

The primary focus on the interview is the work of the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) during Youmans' years of affiliation. In this, he outlines the history of the WRDC's creation, its mission, and the many projects with which he was involved as director of the center. Of particular note are Youmans' recollections of the WRDC's involvement in issues of rural health care, economic development, and leadership education, as well as the center's collaboration with the Americorps program and its volunteers.

As the session nears its conclusion, Youmans reflects on his retirement from OSU, the relocation of the WRDC to Utah State University, changes in the social problems that the WRDC is now trying address, and his own activities in retirement. The interview concludes with notes on Youmans' family and a few closing thoughts on the continuing evolution of rural communities across the country.

Interviewee

Russ Youmans

Interviewer

Mike Dicianna

Website

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

Transcript

Mike Dicianna: Okay, today we're with Dr. Russell C. Youmans, he's Director Emeritus of the Western Region Rural Development Center, which was part of the OSU Extension Services. We are in his home in Corvallis, Oregon, today is Tuesday, April 28th. My name is Mike Dicianna, I'm the oral historian for the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project, and we're going to learn about your life and your involvement with OSU.

One of the things that we always start out with is a brief biographical sketch, where were you born, where'd you grow up, what were your early years like?

Russ Youmans: Well, I'll change the date on here Mike, it's May 7th of 2015, and it was a little later, we were trying to get together about that date and I think I was under the weather.

MD: Yes you were, yes.

RY: And you were getting organized, too organized maybe, right off the bat.

MD: Yes, I was way ahead of us.

RY: Well Mike, I was born in Illinois, east central Illinois. Both of my parents grew up on farms in that area of the world where they frequently said, as I grew up, that the soil was black as your hat and good enough to eat. And it's some of the most wonderful soils in the United States. It was prairie and you had thousands of years of grass growing on it and not trees, and it turned out to be incredible soil. So both of my parents grew up on farms.

My dad was headed toward engineering after high school and that sort of thing, but in the Depression engineers weren't getting jobs, and there were three of them that were going, commuting from a little town, St. Joseph, Illinois to the University of Illinois in Engineering. Two of them stayed in Engineering; in Dad's senior year he shifted to education and thought maybe he could get a job as a math teacher. And that did finally happen; he got a hundred dollars a month for nine months.

And then he's three years older than Mom and she did not go on to college, but they got married, I think, about the second or so year that he was out. He graduated in 1933. So right in the good, hard part of the Depression. And then I was born in April of 1936, and at that time Dad had taught, started teaching in the little town of East Lynn, Illinois, and then got a job in Urbana. He was assistant coach on some very good football teams and basketball teams - the basketball team made second in the state, and in Illinois, even when I was in school, there was only one state championship. We didn't have these different league sizes. And the little school up in northern Illinois, Hebron, won the state championship. And I don't know how many students they had, probably less than two hundred in the school, and they won the state championship, beating all the big Chicago schools and whatnot with several thousand in school.

So at any rate, Dad was then in Urbana, and maybe it was destiny, but the first house I remember as a wee tot was on East Oregon. And then the folks bought a little house about the time I was probably four or five, because I went to kindergarten at Leal School, and they bought a little house on West Oregon. So I think I was destined to wind up in Oregon at some point, but that was—the route was wound around here, there and yonder, a little bit like Yogi Berra; "when you come to a fork in the road, take it," and that's sort of the philosophy, I guess, here.

So I started school in Urbana and then Dad got a job at a small rural school as principal of the high school and still a math teacher in Cerro Gordo, Illinois. And so from second grade through seventh grade I was there in Cerro Gordo, a town of about a thousand. It wasn't a county seat, exceedingly agricultural county, one of the early places to really concentrate on growing soybeans. And Staley's built a big plant thirteen miles west in Decatur, and on the summer evening sometimes, with the gentle western wind, you could smell the Staley plant thirteen miles east of there.

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Anyway, we were in Cerro Gordo, and in 1946 my grandfather actually went back on the home farm, and the farm came from my grandmother's family, the Clark family, and the family still owns that farm. Mary and I have given my portion of the farm to our three children and my sister has given hers now to her two children, so the farm is in another generation's

hands at this point. I have continued to sort of do the family management of the farm. But the farm has been in the family since 1840, so it's only two hundred acres, but as I say, it's good soil. And so it doesn't look like we're going to have anybody go back and farm it, but the person who is farming it, actually, the two families have worked together for about five generations. There's never been a marriage between the two families, but we've lived close enough together and have worked together for a long time. So we don't worry a lot about trust with the farm.

So let's see, then in 1946 when Granddad took the farm back - he'd been in business and I'd like to know how he started the business, because he started it in the Depression and grew the business. It was in propane gas, and a lot of farms didn't have electricity at that time, including our farm, so he sold gas stoves and gas refrigerators and some gas lights throughout the county, and built that during the Depression. And he sold that actually when my grandmother had diabetes, came down with diabetes in the early '40s. And then, as I said, Granddad took the farm back and started farming it, living in town as they had lived since 1928. And so with Dad being a school administrator and whatnot, we could go in the summer. The farmhouse was empty, so in the summertime we would go back to the farm and Dad would help cultivate and keep the farm going and help Granddad through the summer. And that continued for three years.

So I spent the summers on the farm, and I don't know whether I was driving either a jeep or a tractor when I was ten, but I know I was when I was eleven, and so I got that sort of background in agriculture at that time. In 1949 Dad left school teaching and we actually moved back to the farm. And at that point the farm still didn't have electricity. The Rural Electrification Administration put lines in in the '30s to a road a half a mile away from us, but we were in the Illinois Power District and we had no electricity, which meant we had no water in the house, we still had an outhouse and whatnot. So that year, Dad and Granddad got Illinois Power to extend the line that came down to us, and it actually brought electricity to two other farm families on that road, and so then we did have electricity and then you could put in a water system and a bathroom and water heaters and all kinds of nice things.

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And so I sort of experienced that from '46 to '49, and then went to Clark School, named after—because the land had come from the family, this was three quarters of a mile down the road, went to a one-room country grade school for my eighth grade. Now I must say that that year probably just sort of repeated the work that I had had in the school in Cerro Gordo in the seventh grade. It may not have been all bad; I wound up reading some things in the library, which was the top of a kitchen cabinet that sat over in the corner of the room, but the two books that I remember reading particularly were *Little Men* and *Little Women*. There were some other books on those shelves and I think I read not everything in there, but I read, for sort of the first time, sort of setting down with a solid adult book and reading, because I had that kind of time. There were twenty-seven kids in that room in seven grades with one teacher, and so there was time to do that.

The next year I went St. Joe High School; a hundred and twenty kids in the whole school. My class, when we graduated, was nineteen; seven guys and twelve gals. I think there—well I'm pretty sure there were four of us that went on to college and then two of the girls that—myself and a close friend, closest friend I had, Bill Denhart, went on to college, and two of the girls went on. Three of us went to University of Illinois which is, you know, twelve miles away, and the other one, she may have gone to Illinois for a year, but then I think she transferred and whatnot and she wound up with a music degree. So four of us went on to college, all of us, the four of us graduated from college and two of the girls went into nursing school. I don't think any of the rest of them, I'm not aware of what they did at that point.

So at the University of Illinois - and I've tried to do a little bit on the web but I don't think it still exists - but there was a competitive exam that was done in each of the counties. And Illinois has something like a hundred and two or a hundred and four counties, and it was a competitive exam on a Saturday, kind of late your senior year, and there was some on math and English I think you had to take and then maybe social science or science or something like that. I think there was sort of three sections in the exam. And the person who got the highest score in the county could go to any college at the University of Illinois. And then there were categories; there was one category for children of veterans of the Spanish American War. Well, even in the 1950s, there weren't any of those. And I don't know whether there was for, I expect veterans of the Second World War, yeah, they could have been in school. But there was also a scholarship for agriculture, for home economics, and there may be a few others in that.

And I lucked out and got the one for the county, for agriculture. I didn't know her at the time, but my wife down in Randolph County got the one from home ec in her county. So we both wound up with it. And the scholarship - the

decision to go to the University of Illinois was not totally this - but the scholarship paid to tuition. And tuition in those days was seventy-five dollars a semester. Not a quarter, a semester. So for a hundred and fifty bucks a year I went to the University of Illinois. The scholarship, it was good for four years if you kind of kept your nose clean and made half-decent grades. And I got that done somehow.

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So I wound up in the College of Agriculture. I was also in the NROTC program. And I don't remember whether we got paid the first two years or not, I know the people who were in Army and Air Force did not get paid the first two years they were in. That was required of all males.

MD: Was that a land grant, Illinois?

RY: Land grant institution. Land grant. Another rule that frequently is never known is that land grant legislation required that the graduates know how to swim.

MD: I've seen that.

RY: Now I don't think there are many of them that kicked people out because they couldn't, but it's sort of an interesting one. But in the Navy we took a three hour course plus drill, so I know I had at least twenty-four hours, semester hours, of naval science. So it was kind of a little bit difficult to start doing majors. I mean it was sort of like you were majoring in that. And so I wound up graduating in General Agriculture, and then I don't know if there's anything else particularly to talk about.

MD: Well I always like to hear college life stories. Were you in a fraternity?

RY: I was. I was in Farm House. And my dad had actually gone to Wabash, a male school over in Crawfordsville, Indiana, with about eight-hundred boys in the freshmen year, and then the Depression hit. Dad was a Phi Delt at Wabash. But I wasn't, I guess I wasn't real eager to get in the Greek world. Farm House was very much a fraternity but it struck me as better - I rushed Phi Deltas and whatnot, but stayed in Farm House and stayed with just really good friends. And several of us wound up married to the same person for fifty-plus years, and we went through school together.

I might say, I know I kept records in part, but it cost me eleven hundred dollars to go—out of pocket—to go my freshman year, because I made it in to the Glee Club, which meant that I needed to buy tails. Excuse me, I needed to buy a tux. Then the Glee Club was selected to go on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in New York, and for that we all had to buy tails. Now a freshman didn't get to go on the trip, but on our concerts, increasingly we were using the tails for concerts, so we all had to get tails. That's what put my price up to eleven hundred dollars that first year. Although the Glee Club got a big used clothing outfit in Chicago to pull used tails together, and so it didn't cost us a huge amount of money to do that, but I wound up with the pants and morning pants and the whole bit.

I also had, the last three years, at the end of my freshman year and then for the next three years, I had a meal job. And the house, Farm House, would permit us to have a meal job but it was only half time. And I don't know, that was worth like half off your board. It was like twenty-five dollars a month or something like that. And the Navy, I think, was paying me ninety cents a day. That's twenty-seven dollars a month. And so those two went together. Then I, about the time I was a sophomore in high school, because I had a 4-H project with sheep, I went through an Extension sheering school at the university, learning how to sheer when I was about a sophomore, and then I started sheering for myself, and for neighbors and others. And about a third of the money for going to college I made sheering sheep in the spring.

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So that was summer jobs. I was paying for college as we went through. That's not possible anymore to do that. And so I was senior track manager, I worked with the track team for three years and wound up with the position as a senior. And that was an interesting experience. They don't have them anymore at the University of Illinois, but on travel, when we traveled as a senior, I took the money. I didn't have to pay hotel bills; that was done. But meal bills and that sort of thing, which would amount to a good many hundreds of dollars with a team that might be fifty people. So I handled those sorts

of things when we traveled, as well as when I was a senior, we had the indoor championships at Illinois and those were major responsibilities for me to work with timers and judges and whatnot in that. So that was a major activity also.

MD: How big of an institution was Urbana? Was it on par with OSC at the time, you think?

RY: No, it was bigger.

MD: Bigger? Yeah.

RY: It was about eighteen thousand.

RY: And so Oregon State, in my years over there, I'm not sure we ever got up to eighteen thousand before I retired in 1999. It was thirteen thousand, maybe it was less than that a time or two in there. But I've commented several times that, good gosh, the physical plant at the University of Illinois, with eighteen thousand students at that time, was like three times the size of Oregon State. I don't know it in square feet of buildings and whatnot, I have no idea, but I had an English class in a ceramics engineering building, and it was not a small building. It was three stories and whatnot. You know, it's just the amount of money that the state of Illinois put in there was, it's a bigger state and whatnot, but I think Oregon State has got a heck of a buy with what has been invested in the physical plant here at OSU. It's just quite a different world from those big institutions in the Midwest - Minnesota, Purdue, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio State, it's just huge.

Anyway, Mary and I actually met through 4-H between high school and college, but she was going to the University of Illinois also, and there were several things out of 4-H that put us together even when we were at college. The two of us were selected to go represent Illinois in Kentucky at the end of our freshmen year in college. We weren't in 4-H really anymore but we still had some ties through long years with 4-H. Anyway, we dated through college and got married right afterwards. So I was commissioned on a Friday, we were graduated on Saturday and married on Sunday, and we left for the Navy on Tuesday.

MD: Wow.

RY: But I've often said that I had two hundred and fifty dollars in the bank just before we got married, and about three years ago Mary was cleaning out a drawer, found an old bank book from those days; I had twenty-five dollars in the bank about two weeks before we were married. I had to borrow money from the folks to pay for the trip to California to report for the Navy in San Diego.

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MD: Now what did you do – you were commissioned as a Lieutenant?

RY: Right, ensign in the Navy. And I served two years aboard the USS Calvert, an amphibious ship that had served both in the European theaters and in the Pacific during the Second World War. So it was two years aboard a ship as a line officer, and then I got out in early July of 1960, went back to Illinois, and got into summer school to pick up some courses I hadn't taken. I had never taken a course in logic, and a course in statistics, and I took those two that summer. I hadn't applied for graduate school anywhere, I didn't know about the Graduate Record Exam and whatnot, I didn't know about those things. I was in the Navy.

And so I don't know how but I rather suspect—Purdue and Illinois are about a hundred miles apart and I think, the only way I can figure it happened, I went over to Purdue and sort of walked in the door and said, "what do I need to do to be a graduate student in Agricultural Economics?" And Dr. Charlie French - I'm sure that's who it was, he was assistant department head at that time and in charge of research in the department and graduate work in the department, I expect that's who I would have seen. And somehow he said, "well, we got a teaching assistantship that you can grade papers in a statistics class that one of our professors is teaching." So I got that and Mary went across the street and got accepted into Clothing and Textiles for graduate work. I got a hundred and thirty dollars a month, she got a hundred and sixty. So we were in. And then I worked there in the department, finished up a master's degree working on economic impacts of health, disease on Indiana farmers. Not a usual kind of topic for an ag economist.

And then the opportunity came up as I looked at a PhD. Purdue and Arizona and Ohio State and Wisconsin had signed contracts with USAID - the Agency for International Development in the State Department - to work with four institutions in Brazil, to help the Brazilian schools that were already functioning in the area of Agriculture, to add graduate work to their programs. And again, Charlie French said "would you be interested in doing that with Ed Shue?" And Ed was an associate professor at that time, a PhD at the University of Chicago back down in Indiana. But Ed had agreed to go to Brazil as one of the faculty members down there, and so I became one of Ed's students. And when I finished up the requirements needed to be a candidate for the degree, basically coursework and preliminary examination, in the fall of 1963 our first child was two years old at that point, and anyway, we left for Brazil for two years.

And so down there I wound up teaching two three-hour graduate courses over the two year period of time, and one graduate one-hour seminar in resource economics. And then I helped students, I had several students. And then Ed came back, not early, but he came back well before we did. And I helped finish up several students that he had. And one of the great things about it is Purdue paid several women there in town to teach Portuguese to the American faculty and to their spouses; an hour a day, five days a week, for as long as you'll take them. If you were there for four years you could take it for four. And so you worked on the Portuguese language. And the instruction that the Americans gave on the Purdue project was all in Portuguese.

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MD: Wow.

RY: The American, the Purdue professors taught in Portuguese, not in English, which made it a whole lot stronger program as a result. Anyway, we participated in that and then in, really I guess early December of 1965, we came back to Purdue and I finished up at that point and then began to look for other jobs. And there were several open and one of them was - Emery Castle had been dean of faculty here at Oregon State, and Burt Wood moved up from an ag econ head position to the director of the Ag Experiment Station here, and Emery moved back to the department from the dean of faculty position. And the Purdue faculty has an incredible appreciation for Emery, as a person and as an economist. And so I lucked out with Emery coming back, and Emery put a position together and that's what brought me to Oregon State.

MD: That's what brought you along, yeah. And so you were actually part of the Department of Agriculture in the school? Or with Extension then?

RY: My position was research, resident instruction, and Extension. The first year it was fifty percent Extension, and then a small percentage of resident instruction and then, I don't know, forty-five percent or something like that research. I was always a blend, always had at least some research, maybe nearly half, and then a portion of it in Extension as well. And for a while, there was several years in which I was in charge of the undergraduate resident student program in the department. Fortunately, in ag econ at least, virtually all of the faculty were advisors to undergraduates. So I was a, quote, "head advisor," but I didn't have any more students that reported to me than did the others, regardless of whether they were full professors or whatnot. It was spread out, which I think it really should be. What else?

MD: Yeah, so Agricultural Economics actually has a long history at Oregon State.

RY: Oh yeah.

MD: And so you guys were cutting edge for your era.

RY: Right.

MD: And you're still there now.

RY: Well, and what really happened is when—Emery was well-known nationally for resource economics. The book that he had in farm management was used nationally. I don't know where it is now, but he was known for that as well. But he became really well-known for resource economics, and a number of faculty that he pulled together worked on those kinds of issues. And my Extension work in those early years wouldn't be recognizable by many Extension people even in this state, let alone nationally, but I did a lot of work on the Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission which was a federal

commission, but it worked with the Columbia River, so there was certainly Washington and Oregon, but also the Snake coming out in Idaho a little bit, and Wyoming and Montana.

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But we worked with the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, the, in those days, Soil Conservation Service, and the Forest Service. So there were federal agency people on that commission staff, advisory group. We weren't being paid by the commission but the—like how do you allocate the water out of the system? And so, you're looking at municipal, industrial, waste, irrigation, transportation, hydro power; you're looking at all of these kinds of, quote, "markets" for the water and trying to evaluate where it might most productively be allocated in the Northwest. And so that was the kind of Extension work that I was doing, was with the River Basins Commission.

MD: Yeah, more of a commission-level versus working with a lot of the-

RY: Right. Now that doesn't mean - I would, Mike, I remember going up and talking to farmers and ranchers around Hermiston on some water issues, and then the kind of stuff that we were doing with the commission also applied to Oregon people as well, so—

MD: Yeah, and so the county offices of Extension—

RY: And the State Water Resources Board worked with their staff as they worked across Oregon.

MD: And so you were looking at it from an economics point of view.

RY: Right, right.

MD: As opposed to mechanical or-

RY: Right, yeah I was not a hydrologist. I also believe that water runs downhill, but you'll get into what are the economic returns, and you're into a resource that's very different than corn and soybeans and coal and whatnot. There's no big market that determines the price of water, and so you've got some other sorts of estimates to do on what is water delivering economically for you. And we got into such things as clearing dog-hair thickets of timber in order to get snow on the ground so that it didn't evaporate, but it was on the ground and would go in and maybe change the temperature of the water in the John Day River in August. And if you could lower the temperature of the John Day River in August, it would have an impact on the diseases of the fish in the river. And where do you get the data to do that? It was-

MD: Sounds like fascinating work.

RY: Well it was sort of stretch your imagination. It was, how are you going to get your hands around this to try to understand the problems? And you can you do some things like that that would reduce the amount of silt in the river that will back up behind the dams and make them useless in how many years, seventy-five, a hundred, a hundred and fifty? And so there's these sorts of things that go on that a poor kid from east central Illinois, you know-

MD: And they hardly have any huge giant rivers and mountains and things to deal with like that.

RY: Right.

MD: Lots of snow, I'm sure.

RY: Yeah.

MD: Well, so this was all basically during the late '60s and early '70s, and so throughout this period of time you were doing economics work, and 1977 in July—

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RY: Right, but I'm going to back you up a little bit.

MD: Oh, okay.

RY: A farmer in Linn County, Hector Macpherson, was elected to the state legislature. And I would submit it would be very difficult - I didn't realize he'd only served one term in the Senate, but the land use law in Oregon was started really by Hector Macpherson. He was in on several of the other things, I'm sure, with the Bottle Bill, and some others were in that. But I doubt if you'll find anybody on a single term that had the impact on Oregon that Hector Macpherson did. And it was very important that he was a farmer, because on the land use law, the private owners of timber land and the private owners of agricultural land are the people who are going to pay a major price for changes in land use that might affect the value of the forest or agricultural land.

A farm family in Polk County, the major asset that they hold is the land and the value of that land, and if they don't have any children that are going to come on it, come retirement time, forced by medical reasons or age or whatever, a desire to retire, that farm may well be the bank account that would pay for retirement. Well, if it's available for subdivisions or whatever, spread out all over the countryside, they may pay a high price for it. In terms of the value of the land, for a forty-acre housing development is quite a bit different than for raising rye grass. So it may be relatively easy to get land use votes through the city population, but trying to get it in to the rural areas is tough.

And so an Extension person by the name of Ted Sidor had worked in counties here in the state and had been brought in - I don't if know, he wasn't a district supervisor. But anyways, Ted was here on the state staff, and when this came along he developed - really to some extent, the early part of it was like *The Flintstones*. You know, it was a slide show. And I remember reading in his final retirement report, and I don't think I saw the whole thing but I saw part of it, I read it and it was amazing to me because he said he gave this talk two hundred—it was either two hundred and ninety-eight or two hundred and ninety-nine times. Now I know I gave it once down in Coos Bay or Brookings, someplace on the coast one time, because he couldn't go, sick or something. But anyway, this one showed you these cave men, I mean, they could throw stuff wherever they wanted to, you know. And so it started off with a little bit of humor in this slide presentation about what land use laws would mean and why they take place. And he had photographs of strip housing, businesses out where they were alone. But you had to run school buses or you had to maintain roads differently or all sorts of things that are public costs. And he had pictures of those.

But he'd go into a community and he would use pictures from other communities, not from theirs. So they would say "well that's not us, but we've got that same kind of problem," rather than pointing right at them. So he wasn't too subtle but he was a little more subtle, he didn't just do it right in their face. And so he had an impact. And I'm not even sure about the truth of most of what I'm going to tell you, but I've told myself this story so many times and I think it did, but it was in Lake County, and the people said "all we got is cattle and trees, there's no sense in whatnot, I mean all of those things about houses and strip cities and all that, that's not going to help us."

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Well, at some point in time somebody went out in one of the dry lake beds and they found the equivalent of a semi-truck load of fifty-five gallon barrels of something set in the middle of the lake bed. Now I never found out, I mean surely they found out what was in them, but the thought was it was toxic elements probably out of like the Bay Area of California. It was too expensive to get rid of one way and so they hauled it up, dumped it in a lake bed. And the story I got at that point is some people went out and put a fence around it, and I would assume that they went out and the state and DEQ or somebody ran some tests on that to find out what in fact it was. But in something like three weeks, the county court in Lake County had a planning commission, a land use planning commission. Anyway, they got their act together. It didn't take very long, it wasn't a long, critical sort of thing, but Ted Sidor, particularly on the coast, southern Oregon, central and eastern Oregon, gave that talk, as he said, three hundred times, basically, and got people to understand what their relationship could well be to these sorts of things. It wasn't always as direct as you might think.

And at that time, Extension and Geography—and Oregon State has an interesting, very applied Geography Department, and Gordon Matzke can tell you more about it. It might have been, I think there were four. One fellow was, I think, killed in an automobile accident, and I don't remember his name. But anyway, Jim Pease, Marv Gloege, and Phil Jackson, I think, were in Geography and they worked on the land use plans, pulling stuff together from Hawaii and New Jersey and other places that had some land use plans. They were pulling that kind of stuff together, and then Marv Gloege I think had been planner in Lane County—no, in Linn county—and was one of the really well-respected planners in the state. And

OSU hired Marv. And because you had planners, there was one person in a county. You know, you go to Lane County and they might have twenty-five people in the planning department, professionals in the planning department. You go eastern Oregon and there might be one person, and it wouldn't be surprising if that was the only job in the county. And they were going to have to put this program together along with a local planning commission.

So Jim Pease and Phil Jackson and particularly Marv Gloege began to pull an education program together to help train planning commissions on how you get this job done. You know, how you determine agricultural land, or okay, you're going to put down thirty acre blocks, you know, these sorts of things. And timber land and whatnot. And then train planners. And so they put the program together to begin to—after the law was passed—to train the people in the counties to actually implement this program. It wasn't going to just fall out of the sky.

[0:50:14]

And I think it was, to have, quote, "Extension people" in Geography, I think was right at the center of what land grant institutions were supposed to be. You know, we should have had Extension people in History and Art and bookkeeping and all throughout. But for a period of time, I doubt if it's still there, but for a period of time we had, I think, maybe at one point, four, virtually four FTE in Geography, working on that land use program, that a farmer in Linn County really got started. An unusual investment by a university, and I rather suspect it's one that's not really appreciated in the state. I mean we worked with an office, and I've forgotten the name of it, at the U of O that worked tight with county governments. They were a research and policy assistant group for county government, and we worked back and forth with them in those days a lot. Now it was a good collaboration between the two universities. You know, it's ridiculous to talk about civil wars.

MD: Yeah [laughs]. Well you know it is interesting though, to see the places where land grant institutions like Oregon State fit into their state. It's not just a college, I mean we're not just an institution of learning; we have an impact on our state as a whole.

RY: Right.

MD: And this is a prime example of that.

RY: Right. Well, and some people would say that the land grant institution, I mean done in 1862 during the Civil War, is the biggest contribution in education that the United States has made worldwide. I mean it was the agricultural and mechanical arts. The schools to that point basically trained lawyers and the clergy and what passed for medicine at that time. And—

MD: And it was for the elite.

RY: That's right. And so the land grants came along and began to talk about the places where the large populations exist and were trying to make a living, in subsistence agriculture or whatever. Certainly not huge farms. And the small blacksmith shops and, as the Industrial Revolution began to—Edison and others made this thing possible. How do we make it function across the landscape and the population? And it's insightful, I think, for me to know that in Agriculture the research started first, and then Extension came along later, it wants to spread that research.

MD: Wants to spread to the rest of the people.

RY: And so I would submit that you should have the Experiment Station arguing for the Extension budget, and Extension arguing for the research budget. You know, they play off of each other. Extension makes research much more economically productive and Extension is more productive because the research output feeds their agenda.

MD: And that goes back more than a hundred years now.

RY: But we didn't extend that into mechanical arts. We never put the Extension portion on the engineering campus. Why didn't we?

MD: Yeah, that's true.

RY: I mean we just missed it, and the extent to which we could go back and make the university fulfill that total dream, we're missing something.

[0:55:21]

MD: Very interesting thought. Very interesting thought, yeah.

RY: Okay, then in 1972 the USDA—well Congress and the White House actually came together to do something for rural America, finally recognizing that people were leaving rural areas. I mean, I was a full professor at Oregon State University before my dad owned the farm, when my Granddad died. And two hundred acres of Illinois farm, as good as the soil is, couldn't support three or four generations, you had to grow. So we had to get out, and education was a darn good way to get out. And so we did that.

But in '72 the Rural Development Act of '72 was passed and it focused, at the outset, on increasing research on rural—on issues of rural development, let's say. And in that, provided for establishing four centers.

Now for a good many years the Department of Agriculture has sort of organized some things on a regional basis. In the west that means Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, west to Guam, Pohnpei, south to American Samoa, the territories in the Pacific, obviously Hawaii and Alaska are states. So there's thirteen states, and the territories in the Pacific is the western region, and the south and the north-central and the northeast are the other three. And those have been used for various aggregations of research people for regional projects, and for a long time. So when the legislation went in, what they thought of was putting a center in each of those regions in the country to sort of help bring these resources together, knowing full well that there weren't a lot of resources in any of the states to do this kind of research work.

So that started and then, again, Emery Castle really took the lead here in Oregon to write the proposal to establish the center at OSU. And Emery got some of the rest of us to help him with a little section here and section there, but Emery's the one that really put that together. And so the center was located here and we went outside and really looked for a researcher that was interested in, and maybe had a history, in some rural research work in the social science area. And that happened. And so the center here started.

After two years later, the Extension component was added to that. So they didn't start out with both research and Extension; the Extension actually came in two years later. And I really didn't get deeply involved with the center until 1977. In '77 there was a change to be made in the director of the western center and a colleague was on the selection committee and came down to my office and said, "Russ, why don't you put your name in for this job?" And so anyway, that happened and I wound up getting hired for the job, and then I stayed in it for what many people would say too long, maybe three times too long if you're only supposed to stay in a job for six or seven years and then move on. I stayed for twenty-two.

[1:00:29]

But the center, in order to work, when it started out each of the centers had a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to work in thirteen states and four territories. Well we came to some real—at least, I'm not sure about before, the five years before - but when I came in, what we agreed to regionally was we would not pay the professional salaries of any of the collaborators from other stations. They contributed that. That was what they did for us all to work together. There wasn't much argument about that at all. But another thing is, when we made grants to other schools, we didn't pay the indirect costs either, they picked it up. Whereas other grants that go in, there's so much for the grant and then there's a certain percentage that's to pay fixed costs to the university for keeping the lights and heat on, and whatever else. So we didn't pay that; they ate that.

And so, there's a small group, a small foundation in Chicago called The Farm Foundation. Earlier they, like International Harvester and some of the big equipment companies and maybe some seed companies put the money in. I don't know where they get that money now, but they supported regional committees on a variety of issues. One of them was rural development and would bring people together to just talk about what we might be able to do collectively on an issue, but they didn't have any money to work with. So the center, I had been on that committee in the western region, so it was natural for me to go right back to that committee and say "okay, we've got some money." And there was both the research

side of the committee - series of committees doing regional projects, actually - and then the one Extension committee. And so with that group representing each state - and in the west, unlike those big states that we were talking about earlier, Illinois and Purdue and Minnesota and Wisconsin that may have three to ten faculty who work in this area, we might have one in Extension. There might be a researcher that works part time doing some of this, state after state. And sometimes it's almost like they have nobody, but somebody will fill in and whatnot.

So in order to put a—so let's say an issue was rural health services, access to the medical system, which we have. And actually it's a PhD from Oregon State who was on the faculty at University of Nevada that brought this in with a real case in Nevada. And so we began to look at it. Well there was, actually at that time there was a person who hadn't been involved in any of these other things at the University of Arizona who did do stuff with the medical department. Okay, so then you begin to look at, well, all of the states virtually had similar sorts of problems. It turns out the fellow in Arizona and the fellow in Nevada, who was an economist but was working to spread it, and a fellow who's a native of Montana but was on the faculty at Penn State University, had been working on medical issues.

[1:04:53]

So although this is the west, we began to pull people in from around the country, but certainly in the west, in order to begin to address this issue and help a county make some decisions about access to health. So the center, maybe they'd put a small proposal together - don't spend too doggone much time working on it or you're blowing time that you should be working on other stuff. So we would sort of agree within the group what we wanted to work on. It might be five or six people that would put a proposal together and we'd make some small allocation, maybe they could hire a graduate student or pay some travel costs or whatever to get the job done and begin to then put that team together and hold them. Well, we were pulling some resources out of each of the states; they were paying for it. We had paid for a portion of it that'd make a difference in terms of getting that into material that could be used regionally, and in a good many cases once you did that, the Great Plains was interested in it, and so it began to go maybe, to some extent, nationally. The Canadians also began to catch on.

And so we'd get that project going. And then the land use issues and water issues and taxation, Main Street businesses and businesses going in and out, are threatening to move and moving and that sort of thing. Okay, how do we begin to stabilize employment in the communities? So there were other sorts of issues that began to bubble up, and right off the bat for us in '77 is the coal mining explosion that took place in eastern Montana and Wyoming, and it's still going. The big, hundred-car trains of coal headed out. Well how do those communities handle that? So we put together, there were about fourteen or fifteen faculty members - anthropologists, economists, sociologists - that came together on coping with growth. And it could be the coal was a major push on it, because Wyoming and Montana had almost no faculty to deal with those sorts of issues at all.

Well, this group began to put the stuff together to address those issues, but there was also places like in Colorado ski areas. The workforce for the ski area could no more afford to live, and so they, like the coal and oil and whatnot people, some of them may be commuting a hundred and twenty miles one way a day. Two hundred and forty mile round trip. Or they may find a small place to live, you know, at Jackson Hole. And so you had these things sort of going on. Big Sky, the ski area in Montana, Bend, Oregon.

So the group began to work on that, pulled material together. And the format for the materials was to keep them short enough that a county commission, or a county court member, might actually be able to sit down and read about a portion of it. There were something like fourteen different products that came out of that on different topics. Everybody didn't need them all, so you could be selective about what you handed out. And we then ran some three-day training conferences, basically for Extension people, on how to use the material back in their home areas. And we had, I don't know, we'd have forty or fifty Extension people from several states. I remember the first one we had was actually in Jackson, Wyoming, and so there were some people in from Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, maybe Utah, in there to go through those materials so that they knew what they were, they knew how to use them, and they had them in their hands and they could get more. And we did that in, I think, at least three places in the west.

[1:10:43]

And that program did several things. One, it helped several communities really address those kinds of issues. Well you had the oil shale stuff coming on the west slope of Colorado and a little bit in Utah. And then there was one Monday morning you got a call that said, whoever it was, Exxon or whatnot, they're pulling out, or the price of oil has dropped below fifty-two dollars a barrel and it doesn't pay to do it above it. But Rifle and Craig, Colorado had already bought the sewer system in the city, anticipated more growth, because we'd helped them get ready for change and suddenly the change was this direction.

MD: Well that's like North Dakota, South Dakota now, it's the big boom for the fracking and it's just this huge, huge boom.

RY: Right, right. That's the sort of thing. Well, then eight years later we wind up with a downturn, and so we're, at this point, we were looking at hard times, which was another project. To some extent we lucked out. I forget what year it was. I think I, I'm not sure I put it down in here, but they had a fire down on campus in '74, '75 or somewhere in there. There was a fire and burnt the inventory of the OSU Press.

MD: Yes, I think I've seen that in the old *Barometers*, yeah.

RY: I've got the date here. Well, when that happened, the materials that we had for coping with growth were burned. And I'm not sure about hard times - the newer ones were burned as well, as well as everything else we'd done. So okay, we had no inventory at this point, and I think their insurance paid a little bit back, so we got a little bit of money back. And so basically the same group, I mean we'd gone now for ten years or so, some change, but so okay. So the next one was something like *Coping with Change*. A lot of what was—you're using the same source of things whether it's going up or down. When it goes in one direction or the other it may be a different speed, but it's the same source of basic issues that are involved. So then we came out with *Coping with Change*, and really sort of covered both up and down at that point.

MD: I remember seeing one of the programs for bringing high-tech into rural areas.

RY: Yeah, well—

MD: And so there's issues of trying to develop something that wouldn't normally be brought into a rural area like high-tech businesses or—

RY: Well, we didn't really get very much into the types of employment that would work. I guess I'm reminded of some stuff earlier than this, but in Douglas County, we've done a study down there, and the Business school here was working on sort of that end of it. Well it turned out, I think the thing was there's no shoe manufacturers in the United States west of St. Louis, something like that. Well a lot of these issues come from Italy and France and whatever, but with logging going down and the skill of labor and the training and whatnot, one of the things was a shoe plant in Roseburg was one of the high priorities that they looked at. And we had done some economic development work down there and had an input/output model that would run for the county.

[1:15:48]

And so they go to plug this data in but they went down to make a report. They had been hired in the Business school here to make a report. And the guy got down there and before he could even start on the report somebody got up and said "well, we'd like to have anything but sort of a leather operation," which just shot the whole thing down, because one, they had looked into shoes and leather operations, and with I-5 feeding California, Roseburg, with the labor pool, that looked like a match that might work. And they were shot down right off the bat.

So we never—that was my early experience here with colleagues in the Business school. So I would stay away from trying to pick the targets, but put the material together that you could analyze most of what any of them would come up with.

MD: Yeah, and what the impact would be.

RY: Right.

MD: And so you had to kind of stay ahead of trends and ahead of things, well, like the spotted owl destroying the timber industry.

RY: Right. But you don't know what's going to come up next. You sort of put the basics together and then make the adjustments when you can describe what the change entails. And you can begin to then, you know, "alright, what's your level of employment, what's your wage structure, what do you buy in the local area for inputs, besides labor and land and electricity and that sort of thing?" And so you make that go.

Some other things out of the center that had some splash, one was a fairly large grant that we got from the Kellogg Foundation to develop what we called the Family Community Leadership program. And FCL, it was a leadership training program for women, and particularly looking at helping women to deal with public issues in the local area, be it the church or the school or whatever, county government. And so they did the training in part so they'd begin to understand the political institutions - how do you work with a legislature, what's the process of writing a bill and getting it through? Same way with Congress, same way with county commissioners. I mean all of them are different but you learn about what those differences are. And then too, some of it was the traditional leadership training kind of activity.

There were six states in that project that was, as I say, it was funded for three years by Kellogg. Hawaii, Alaska, Montana, Colorado, Washington and Oregon, for the six states. And there was a professional staff. The director of the whole program was located here in our offices, and then there was a paid coordinator of the program in each of the six states. There was an advisory committee. And that program went very well. They had an annual regional training where they pulled all six states together and would do some more broad formal training and sort of take them to the next step - you know, where the major next steps were. And then they could go back and work in the states to spread that training throughout the state.

[1:20:33]

I don't know of any state legislators coming out of that program, but there were several people who ran the committee, ran the election process for legislators in the state legislatures, or in some cases were county commissioners. I know there were several of that. And there's certainly a lot of different impacts on school boards, and school boards I'm sure there was a good many.

MD: Yeah, a lot of local, yeah.

RY: Yeah, really local. And that program worked very well, and then Kellogg then funded it again for another three years and then funded it for a seventh year to go nationally. And I just read something the other day on a letter that came in to support a review of the center - they said that it actually was in all states. I didn't realize they had done that. You know, you sort of hope—and Kellogg, I'm sure—that it was the kind of program that Extension could have integrated into the process and had it forever. It needed some resources, but it used a lot of volunteers like the Master Gardener Program and 4-H. And I think it had that kind of productivity. The group generated educational materials and whatnot. But I think it's a case where budgets and some other things just got in the road. It went on for a few more years, but then somebody would retire and the program would go.

MD: Well that's something I always like to ask people, is you look back at a body of work or a period of time that you've worked, like with the center, and are there things that stand out as what you'd say "these are my accomplishments, this is something that I made a difference?"

RY: Well there are a couple of others. One was that the medical program that came out of that earlier work that I described. And I'm not going to be able to tick off the whole thing, but they basically came up with a set of materials that could go into a county - and in some cases the majority of it might be able to be put together by a secretary in the office. But they would look at, for example, one local hospital, a small clinic with a doctor, a residency of, say, a nurse practitioner, and maybe emergency medical, evacuation people, training volunteer fire department and whatnot, to get people out.

And they had the background material that you could put together basically the costs of doing those various things. And a lot depended upon the rules established by the state medical association. For example, I think it was up in Oregon,

a nurse practitioner could only prescribe medicine for one day. Well, if you had a small woman, a widow, let's say, in Wheeler County around Fossil - I don't know where the pharmacist is for Fossil, but let's say there is one and she needed medicine, she could go to a resident nurse practitioner and get her prescription for one day of medicine. The next day she had to come back in and the next day she had to come back in. I don't know what they would do if it was an antibiotic and usually you have to take it for ten days. But then more than that, a doctor had to, on a weekly basis, go over their records of what they had done and sign off. It was after the fact, but to pay for a doctor to make the range across the Great Plains or eastern and central Oregon blew the budget. You couldn't pay for them. So you're precluded from being able to do that.

[1:25:56]

Okay, so maybe you have to get into this leadership ability to influence the writing of the rules established by the local medical association. But what that set of materials did is they showed county after county where they could enter the medical stream. And that had an impact on Congress in the early '90s. We were working actually, at that point, nationally. And the group at the University of Missouri - I had an individual who had the shoes and clothes and moxie to testify in Congress. The Republicans wanted to build under the Kennedy—no, under the Clinton attempt, Hillary's attempt - to get health done in the early '90s. They wanted competition; they wanted the insurance companies and doctors, hospitals, to compete. Well, nationally we put the data together that basically said "that's really nice in some places, but in rural areas it's not a matter of competition, it's whether you can get any access at all. The question is access." And through the Great Plains and east of the Cascade Range, it's a whole different world.

And so some senators and some representatives of some very large congressional districts in the Great Plains heard what they were talking about. A lot of them were Republican. You're talking about a fairly Republican area of the country. And you said "the people that you represent don't have access," and so "how are you going to do that?" And it changed a good many votes on where the problem really would lie. In metropolitan areas you're okay, but in dispersed rural areas which, geographically, covers a lot of the United States, if anything we're working in the opposite direction.

MD: Well it goes along with the whole line of the metropolitan areas make the decisions for the rural areas and they don't

RY: Well even in the west - we pointed this out at a station that was chaired by Governor Lamm from Colorado, but this is a good many years ago too - but the western region is the second-most concentrated area of population living in metropolitan areas, and we're only one or two percent, and that was in a 1980 census that I was working with. It may be more than this now, but at that point we were only one or two percent less population living in metropolitan areas than the northeast. Well you think about it - Utah, the front range of Colorado, Washington, Seattle, Tacoma, Oregon. And so our population is heavily urban. So you go in with that competitive model, you look at the whole population and you say "yeah, that would go very well, we can get the vote for that in our population," but what about eastern Oregon? I mean it's a total different sort of thing. Now there's a few places like Wyoming, or the Dakotas that it's pretty much the same, but the cities aren't very big. So that program on medical, to some extent it was too early. We should have it now, and I don't know where it is now, whether there was any of it left.

[1:31:17]

Another program that we got into in a rather strange way was with the Forest Service, they came to the center and said "we're losing population in some small rural, timber-dependent towns; Drain—

MD: Sweet Home.

RY: Forks, Washington." And so I think it's Region 6, the people in Portland with the Forest Service came to the center, said "we'd like to put a program together to work on those towns and we'd like the center to be the control point on it, rather than the governor's offices in the two states. We'd like to take it as far out of politics as we can." Well, I had worked with them in various places over the years, and so they trusted us to shift money to where the money would be most beneficial. Well about that time, federally, the original President Bush came out with "a thousand points of light," and one of those points of light, before he got out, was something that became AmeriCorps. And we actually, this group with the Forest Service and some others of us from Washington and Oregon, had put a proposal together to do work in Trout Lake in Washington, Forks in Washington, Drain here in Oregon, and I don't remember, there's someplace else also, where you

had youth in the towns that were unemployed, graduated from high school, or maybe didn't graduate from high school, and were kind of stuck. They weren't getting out of the community, they weren't going on to college.

And so we had this proposal, then they came out with the AmeriCorps program, so at that point then the center got a bit involved in it and we pulled a group of people together to re-do that proposal and to submit it to AmeriCorps. We sent it in and a committee to evaluate the programs from across the United States gathered in Washington D.C. to look at them; to make the recommendations, actually. And I think they were going to be there for three days; Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and split up the reading. It was the weekend of the, I think was it Rodney King? In Los Angeles. That was the weekend that happened. That broke loose on like a Wednesday or something like that, and over the weekend.

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All of the ones that succeeded in gaining money were from metropolitan areas in the country. Well the staff got ahold of us out here and they said "we really like your proposal better than almost anything we had, could you write some metropolitan area into the program?" And so we were out the first year so we had a year to get it in. So we dropped Drain out, we dropped Forks out. Trout Lake had some housing up there that had been put up for a jobs program and it wasn't being used anymore. And the district ranger, Jim Bull, wondered about—he was one who sort of had the idea originally, and he stayed with it, of how to help some of the kids from Trout Lake and some others in that area. So we eventually put a program together that would actually have a residential program in Trout Lake and would train people there and they would work out of there, and they would work at Trout Lake and in the Columbia Gorge. And then we put Portland and Vancouver in as a metropolitan area, to do that work.

So basically we had the Gorge and the Portland metropolitan area. And we submitted it and we got it funded. They had problems with how they were going to handle—and we did—handle the resident type of program. But we advertised nationally. The first year we had a few non-high school graduates - and I mean like one or two - that made it into the program or even applied. But we had kids from all over the United States who graduated from college and wanted to make an input. We focused it on environmental issues in the northwest. We had some incredible applications from across the country and selected from those and put training together. And the whole program was located here at the center, but we established an office in the Portland area and hired a director that was up there. He actually came out of the Forest Service, and the Forest Service provided housing for the headquarters of it.

And the Forest Service had actually; I mean from the outset the Forest Service was going to use it for trail building and other environmental stuff within the forest. Well, they got cuts in budget and they weren't able to come in. But we got some utilities, some of the small utilities of co-ops in the two-state area, school districts, county government at times, that would put up the money to pay a portion of the costs, and I don't remember right now what it was.

But the incentive for the AmeriCorps program was they would have set aside, it was just under five thousand dollars a year for their service, and it could be used to pay off a college loan or to pay college tuition. That's basically the two uses it could be made for. And they basically worked for minimum wage over a period of time, and the staff was using OSU motor pool for cars. And so they would put the cars and then they would make them available and they had the cars for a year's use. That began to not be understood as the personnel changes at Oregon State took place, but we ran the program for two or three years or so out of here.

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And it grew; eventually other places in Washington and Oregon began to pick up the program. It shifted over and finally it was taken over by the Education Service District in Vancouver, and they ran it. And it began to be a program—in many cases first there were teams that were put together and they'd go out and work on putting fences up to keep cattle out of creeks, go in and put logs in streams to help them form ribs for salmon spawning grounds. And they had some real luck on that. Of the Fish and Game here in the state, in one case of a small river, awful sandy or something like that, had salmon spawning in it for the first time in thirty years. But they began to work with schools, and I don't know how long—are you an Oregon resident for a long time?

MD: All of my life, yeah.

RY: Well you may remember when they had a science program in about the fifth grade and they'd use high school kids to take them out to a camp for a week and work with the kids on science, and then that was, you know, budget cuts and that was taken out. Well this group began to go back in and put one of these AmeriCorps members - the local group is Northwest Service Academy - they would go into the schools and work with the science teachers on environmental programs. And there was a school up around Wilsonville, I don't remember that it was Wilsonville, but went in there one time in the science room; there was a creek that went through the school grounds and they had gotten I don't know who, Wilco or somebody, to give them gumboots. And anyway, they got gumboots for all the kids.

Anyway, they were out wading in the stream cleaning up exotics and, across the ceiling of the science room from one corner to the far corner, they had a drawing of the stream, of what they wanted the stream to look like. And they wanted logs in and they wanted to take out some of the concrete that was in it. And the kids had painted that on the ceiling and they had tools there and they were so much working out there in the stream. And one of us said "well that sounds real great"—oh, they had a door, an outside door on this science room so they could go right out the science room and out to the stream. And one of us asked the teacher, "what do the janitors think of this? I mean you got these kids in gumboots coming back in from the stream across the yard and whatnot, it's got to be a mess in here." He said "the janitors love it, the kids are all excited. And so they dragged in some mud; they wash off the bulk of it outside, but the kids have got the janitors involved in it." And so they were fine with the program. And so you saw all that.

In the case of Vancouver, we were up there when they were closing the program down. And it was in a junior high school, low income area of Vancouver, Washington, and this teacher got up - sixth grade teacher or something like that, a fellow - and before he got done he was in tears, and he wasn't alone. I had tears in my eyes before he got done. But he told about his class and these kids from AmeriCorps had worked with him all year, and they had stories of, I mean, a number ten can would be like a week's worth of garbage from a school room. And then worms on the leftovers from lunch and they were selling bio-organic cleaning material for homes, and they'd take them home.

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But anyway, they had a week that they were taking the kids out and doing some specific work with them from there. And so his class was going with them, except four kids. He had four kids who were well behind in reading ability, and he said when they took them these kids wanted to go, but he said "I just thought the most valuable thing to do would be to focus on those kids reading." So they took the rest of the class and they went out and did their thing on the environment and he had one week where he could work with four kids on reading, and he said he made so much progress. He said, "if I could do that time and time within a class, somehow have the ability to focus an hour, or two hours, three hours a day with a problem at some times in the year," he said "I think it's the greatest contribution that I could make, and the AmeriCorps kids gave me that chance." So those are the kinds of things that stayed with you and say yep, it's worth the fight.

MD: Worth the fight. Well now, the center has, in the mid-nineties, since then it's been in Utah?

RY: Right.

MD: There was a change...

RY: It was in '99, and so I sort of thought I'm long-toothed on this one, it's probably time, and Experiment Station directors and the Extension directors had all changed virtually, in that twenty-year period of time. And so I sort of felt that the commitment at Oregon State needed to be retested and recommitted, and regionally, the regional directors needed to buy in again. And so this might a good time to put it up for a competitive shot at the location. And so that happened and I obviously withdrew from involvement in it, except the way I could support this, that and the other thing. And then I just planned that I would retire at that point as well so that the break was clean. And the decision was made to move it to Logan, and that's what happened.

As a result of this, I looked up a little bit on the other centers and I had picked it up, but the more central center moved from Iowa State to Michigan State. So originally the four centers were at Mississippi State, Oregon State, Iowa State and Cornell. And the Cornell connection changed to Penn State, that was the first move. And then Oregon, this one, moved from Oregon State to Utah. And then sometime fairly recently the north-central has moved from Iowa State to Michigan State. Mississippi State still has the southern center.

MD: But it's been a continuous organization since, well since '72.

[1:49:58]

RY: Yeah, I—

MD: The mission is probably the same but the product and the problems and the areas of research are changed with the times.

RY: Right. And a lot of those problems - you get hopefully richer, so it's assistance to communities, and the four centers, at times we really worked fairly closely together on one project or something like that. We wouldn't design it that way, but in order to get the resources to put a reasonable project together, we had to go nationally to find the people to do it. So that sort of thing I think also has a big payoff. I think too that there are other issues other than rural development that could benefit from this kind of a center with a little bit of money and ties within the region to address issues. Because in many cases the institutions, singly, don't have the breadth of academic insight and energy to get that job done, and we really need to go a bit broader in order to pull it in. I mean the fields that I—there is some of it that's being done I think on dairy, potatoes and some other things in the Ag Experiment Station building.

But I think there's some other bigger issues that you could probably do this on and it would work. Because one of the things that really helped us, I mean we never had over—it was less than three hundred thousand that we had to run the whole program, even at the end of twenty years. It was never more than that. And some people would laugh and say "well Russ, what are you going to try to do, get your salary up that it'll take the whole thing?" Well yeah, that would be alright. But my salary was paid out of that, all of it, and a secretary and an administrative assistant and an editor. That came out of it. But one of the ways in which—I mean it wasn't really planned this way, I couldn't plan it this way, but in several cases the people who were working on the various projects, their director or dean would give them money to go and work on the project and we didn't—

MD: Out of your budget, yeah.

RY: Yeah, they would pick it up and we would frequently move money from one state—I mean we had a letter of agreement with the state, I mean with the university and a faculty member, but if they didn't spend the money, the money came back to the center. Well, there's a couple of states that they give that letter to the business office and they would put the pressure on for them to spend all the money. But one of the ways that we had been able to stretch it as far as we can, that it goes in many cases that if it wasn't spent directly on a project they just didn't call OSU for a check. And so we were able then to go start another project. And so a lot of times we were coming up well under cost. But because...

MD: Well that's always something that you can look back on and be proud of.

RY: Yeah.

MD: You were able to make that much of an impact on what amounts today as a shoestring, because...

RY: Well people have fixed ideas in many cases about what university faculty do, and many times it's not very complimentary. But I'll have to say that the people I worked with over the years were darn hardworking, talented, committed, and several of them came out of the Peace Corps. Several of the best came out of the Peace Corps. I think it's a real recommendation for the Peace Corps. The people, they wanted to be academicians, but they wanted that academic insight to pay off in communities, in families, for individuals. And they really stayed with that, although they never referred to it. I mean we'd hear some Peace Corps stories occasionally, but not really. It made life a whole lot easier for me, because they were really committed.

[1:56:16]

MD: Well let's talk about your retirement. Now you left the agency, the center, did you continue on in an advisory capacity, or was it a clean break and you—

RY: It was nigh unto an absolutely total break. In fact, the western center doesn't even have me down on their mailing list to send me anything. I could be ticked off about that, but to some extent I'm not. But there is a program that I haven't talked about called Business Retention Expansion, and that actually came out of a friend who was on the faculty at OSU, Ohio State University. And he developed this program basically to work on the Rust Belt problems in Ohio back in those years, Youngstown and whatnot. I think he got the idea maybe from an Irish program that I'm not aware of, but they went in to get a group of community leaders trained to be actually virtually professional interviewers, and they developed then, working with a local committee, a questionnaire to go to businesses, to be taken to businesses and to sit there with the management and fill out the questionnaire. And so they were trying to get bankers - I mean the president of the bank, don't send the youngest teller. We want the power of the community basically to do this, people that are going to make a difference, and go interview not all the businesses, but a significant portion of businesses and we'll divide them up by size and we'll interview more of the big ones and fewer of the really small ones, but pretty good size.

And then you're not asking about how much money they make and what their salaries are or whatever, but you're asking about, do they plan on hiring more people or laying people off? And anyway, George Morris, who was a fellow at Ohio State and then he moved to Minnesota, we took work with George and we began to adapt the program for small communities, not Youngstown and Toledo and Columbus and whatnot. And he was an ag economist but he was dealing with the big problem in Ohio at that time. So we developed a program to work in smaller towns, cities, and began to do it in the west. And they've really had a very active program in Montana and New Mexico.

They had developed an outstanding program. We did some training to help people understand how it did, but you really had to train a group of people, say twenty-five or thirty or so people to do the interviewing, because you were asking busy people to do the interview. And so you couldn't ask for too much. But amazingly, when it had succeeded, they saw what the benefits were. As an example, there was one in Helena, Montana and the person - I don't remember who did the interviewing, what their role in the community was - but the owner of this, there's a manufacturing plant that made office furniture, and so part of it is you get through it, they begin to ask about what sorts of problems do you have and that sort of thing. And they stayed right in that and probed fairly systematically.

[2:01:05]

Well anyway, turned out he was thinking of leaving the community, taking the business, and he was to the point where he had sort of a short list of communities to go to, like three, and was pretty close to making the decision. Okay, so this is a serious question, this Business Retention Expansion is the title of the program, so we're talking about retention here. And I don't remember how many people he employed, but in small western towns a dozen is significant, because they were good paying jobs. Well it turned out he was having trouble with the quality of electric service and he needed three-phase or whatever and he was having fluctuation in power, and on some of the equipment that he had it would shut down or close down or drop off, and he'd ruin material. And so he was ruining material and it was happening a good bit.

Well the way this thing works is the group frequently gets together and they will sort of go over the questionnaires. Well in this, Montana Power has one of the people there, the guy who's the local manager of Montana Power. Well he pricks up his ears when he hears this, and in like two days he had his engineers over at this guy's shop. And so "tell us about the problem." You know, he never complained about the power company, or if he had, it hadn't made it up through the tiers. So the engineers went to work on it, they solved the problem, Montana Power went in and paid for material that he'd lost and the equipment that he had lost, and they stayed in Helena.

MD: And all those jobs were saved.

RY: Right. And there were examples like this time and time again. It could be a bank. And in some cases, what they needed was access to a program that existed at the state level and they didn't know about it. And so somebody who was, say, in the Economic Development office in the community on the committee, they say "we got three programs that address that kind of an issue." It depends on how big the company is or whatever. And so they could begin to solve some of these problems in a hurry.

MD: Yeah. It's all about outreach.

RY: Well, it's about communication. And a good many times the owner of the business said "this is the first time anybody in this community has crossed that threshold and asked seriously how the business is doing." That was worth a tremendous amount. Somebody else cares.

MD: Yeah.

RY: And I actually did one of those here in Corvallis, and people changed hands, several people left the community for other jobs and the whole thing died.

[2:04:49]

MD: Yeah, it's a continuity thing, I guess.

RY: I did that after I'd retired. But when I did retire, at the time I'd started a program down in Crescent City in Humboldt County and was working on that and I finished that up. So I worked on a couple things. There was also a study up in the five county areas on the Columbia - Hood River, Wasco and maybe two counties on the Washington side - a study that we were doing up there, and I continued to do that afterwards. No salary, I just had enough money left over to pay travel, so I could pay my gas bills and that sort of thing.

MD: Now have you been involved with Corps, the...

RY: AmeriCorps?

MD: Yeah.

RY: No, I turned that over. I was on the board and I dropped out of that. I had worked on it for ten years or so total and stayed with it after the administration of it left here. But at this point the farm in Illinois - it's a crop share lease, which is an old form of lease. I've done that, but I'm in the process of transferring that to the next generation and I think a year from now that one will largely be handled by the next generation. And out of Mary's family there's some land out at Yuma, Arizona that her dad, a farmer, had purchased about 1950 to grow alfalfa seed. The way he made money in southern Illinois to send his children to college was he was a seed producer for Illinois Crop Improvement Association. The breeding work that went on at the university and the new varieties of soybeans or wheat or whatever, he would then grow that and sell the seed. And so that was before Monsanto and Roundup and all that.

Well, he saw a market for more alfalfa seed than he could produce, and so he was looking for a place to raise alfalfa seed and found some land outside of Yuma, Arizona on the Colorado River, but he was never able to get it into production. And so they gave that to their children and their children's' spouses. That's a real hope, and it worked. So we have worked to get that under irrigation and there's now two hundred and twenty acres of it that's irrigated land. And Mary and I have taken care of getting that going, and that started in the mid-seventies when all of this was going. But we got some really good help down there, farmers to come in and join in the development. And so it's a good-looking going operation at this time.

MD: Well Russ, one of the things that we always like to ask about is to kind of fill the life story in with family - how many kids, grandkids, that type of thing.

RY: Well, we have three children. The oldest was born in Indiana when I was in graduate school, and so she was born in 1961 and she was two years old the day we got in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro. And then the second daughter was born in Brazil. She's the girl from Ipanema. Mary was staying with the Agricultural Attaché in the embassy and they frequently put people up, Americans who were working somewhere in the country, and Mary stayed with them. And I left to go back to where we lived, two hundred and fifty miles away. And Anne, the second one, was born I think only two days later or something like that. And so she was born in Brazil. And then our son was born in '68. He was born here in Corvallis, so we have one Oregonian and one *Brasileira* and a Hoosier.

[2:10:24]

And the oldest one is married and has two boys, one's a senior in college and the other is a freshman. They're just completing the junior year and freshman year of college in Milwaukee. And then the middle daughter - all of them went to Crescent Valley, through the school system here in Crescent Valley - and I think Jane was in the first four-year class at Crescent Valley. But then Anne and her partner live in Portland.

And Jane does consulting work; her background is education. She's actually an English and French teacher, but developed a program, and a lot of this was at Northwest Mutual. It's been a long time purchaser of her time, of developing education programs for within to train internal people with respect to policy changes in the company and that sort of thing. So it's largely internal education within the company. She went to Carlton in Minnesota.

Anne went to Stanford from here, an industrial engineer, and she's been a consultant in the last several years, but she worked for Intel for a while and she worked with Oracle for a while. And then she began to work with consulting firms; sort of an Oracle expert in manufacturing processes and whatnot. She's actually now working back for Stanford on some internal management at Stanford, and has been for years. So she seems to be enjoying it.

Our son is a social science teacher currently teaching seventh grade, but he's worked in high school in seventh grade in Shoreline, in the Seattle area. He's married and they have a four year old. And so this is really the first time for Mary and I to be able to enjoy and sort of grow up with one of the grandsons. We've got three grandsons. So back in the, well in the nineties, '94 it actually started, but Mary bought some ground on Orcas Island in the San Juans, and in '94 we started building a, quote, "cabin," unquote. And Clark actually worked for the general contractor. There were three of them that got the skin up of the house, got the siding along the outside windows and doors and the roof was on and whatnot, and we took it at that point and we started in, putting in insulation, and it took about ten years to get it pretty well done, building the decks, and we did that, all of that during that period of time.

So we look forward this month to going up and going shrimping; we've got a boat and we'll go out and shrimp, which you can't do really in Oregon because the water isn't deep enough, that's in close. You'd have to go offshore. So up there you can do close in, the northern end of Puget Sound - well, all through Puget Sound - but where we are is in the northern end of Puget Sound. And the shrimp we're looking for is the spotted shrimp, which is the largest one up there. And you got to be able to go two hundred and fifty feet to get them, and where we go we tend to be at about four hundred feet of water.

[2:15:03]

MD: Is that commercial or just for—

RY: Pardon me?

MD: Is it commercially, or just for—

RY: No, no, no, this is for sport, sport fishing.

MD: For enjoying, yeah.

RY: Yeah, so we use a trap like a crab trap. By and large May is it, although if there's not enough shrimp taken we can go ahead and shrimp later, but we generally don't. And then mid-July starts the crab season. It's interesting, down here it's November or so before you can really get any hard-shell crabs, but up there it's in mid-July. And so basically from July to Labor Day. And so starting in the middle of July we'll crab, and occasionally we'll go salmon fishing and whatnot.

MD: You'll get a chance to enjoy some time, and then the grandkid gets to come up...

RY: Yeah. And then maybe one of the more important things is we've been part of a reading group for, I think, forty-eight years now, here in Corvallis. Started at the Congregational Church, just not the church started it. Five couples got together and three of the couples are still there; we're one of the three, and the two newcomers have been there for, one of them probably forty-five years and the other one probably thirty-five at this point, when somebody retired or left the community. And so, as a matter of fact the group gets together tonight, and ten people can fill a living room for each of us, and so it doesn't get any bigger than that. And we agree on books and read them and have dessert and discuss them. So that's been an important—

MD: So you're enjoying life.

RY: Yeah, yeah.

MD: Well one of the things I always do, try to get out of my people, is if you have any special reflections or words of wisdom to the Beaver Nation, to your fellow Beavers and fellow OSU folks that you'd like to impart.

RY: Well, you know it turns out education is pretty important. With the sort of thing that's going in Baltimore and Ferguson and whatnot, with the studies that have gone on with African American young males for a lot of years has basically said that their returns from education are not very high, when you look across a number. There are obviously many, many who are very successful. And I was really discouraged about it. And there was a national conference pulled together by the former Governor Lamm of Colorado, and I was one of two people from the academic community that was at the meeting, which I thought was somewhat too bad. But there were a lot of the foundations that served nationally and in the west and some other nongovernmental organizations; think tanks and whatnot that were there. I don't remember the names of the gentlemen but there was one Native American there who's a major leader and there was a Hispanic attorney there from the Los Angeles area who was a major leader of a Hispanic organization. And independently I caught each one of them at a coffee break or something like that and said, "what do you see as a way to make a positive contribution to the integration, to increasing the range of alternatives that these young men have?"

[2:20:26]

And both of them came back to education. Now it was true—actually I think both of those people were attorneys, I think both of them are—and clearly they had both succeeded in the type of institutions that we currently have in education. They both had survived and thrived. But I went in thinking education. But there was a period of time in there when, like Baltimore and Ferguson, Ferguson being different; in Baltimore, the riots afterward remind you—but they come back and say "education is where it needs to be."

It doesn't start at Oregon State; it's getting enough of those AmeriCorps students, Oregon State students, the ones that have SATs that will get them into engineering and medicine and whatnot, that show up in education and begin to work at the levels of first grade and second grade. I've often thought that kindergarten and first grade teachers should be paid higher than college professors. But I didn't go that route, although my mom probably thought that's where I should have gone. So you've got to hang on to education.

But one thing about rural development in this; it starts way early. You're talking about the nutrition of a young woman that's pregnant and helping them produce a youngster that's got a chance, and then that input of words and love to help get them into school where they're ready, with a vocabulary and a curiosity to go on. And it's got to be for everybody. Particularly the girls, when you look at it worldwide. So that's, you know, what does an ag economist have to do about that? Well I think we can make our contributions too.

MD: Well Russ, it's been truly an honor and you're fascinating. On behalf of the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project, we thank you for your story.

RY: Well, you know it's always a mystery to me of why an Oregon school would select a beaver, which most foresters look at as a real pest. I would have thought Oregon State, the mascot would be a logger, and it's a beaver. So beavers do some important things environmentally, in terms of that fish habitat and putting wood in the river and all that sort of thing, so maybe it's a broader view of Oregon State that we really have had projected to us and we didn't really realize it.

MD: Yeah [laughs]. Well thank you very much.

RY: You're welcome.

[2:24:53]