

Extension Oral History Project – Duane Johnson - Part 2

Date: March 29, 2008

Place: Duane's home in Corvallis

Time: 33:35 minutes

Interviewer: Elizabeth Uhlig, Oral Historian

Transcriber: Sue Bowman

EU: This is part 2 of the oral history with Duane Johnson.

[00:15]

Duane, before we broke, you were talking about the various programs that were in Multnomah County and that you helped start. Where did the ideas for these programs come from?

DJ: I would say that the very large percentage of the ideas for strengthening programs and introducing new programs came from the volunteer leaders and the parents and in some cases from other school administrators and other youth development leaders who saying there's a real need for some of these. So in the metropolitan area we used volunteer leader and youth leader committees to put together those concepts and in most of the cases we used outside expertise in the professional field or we used volunteers who had those skills to help develop curriculum and design a group of experiences that could go to meet the particular interest and the needs for those people.

Having mentioned that, too, while in the county in order to continue to reach people we introduced what we called at the time, the "district leader's concept." This was a middle management role that adults working with other adults. As you could believe in a metropolitan area, as is true in all counties, a county agent does not know who to reach all of the people. People respond to people to become involved because of who they know and where they are located. And so we were able to establish quite an extensive, what we called at that time, district leaders, now called community leaders in the county

to reach and organize groups of young people and adults to work together. And that concept since the early '60s has continued to be a basis of program expansion throughout the state.

[2:20]

That lead to what Harold Black, Joe Cox and I and Ed Shannon really felt was a primary emphasis of what we should be doing. And that is training volunteers to be effective youth developers. Not just transfer of knowledge and organize young people for activities, but to build a training program to help them build their skills in working with youth and families. And so we put a very high emphasis on new leader volunteers, having volunteer leader training that was sequential, learning something new the next year, it just wasn't a repeat of the same kind - to build the skills of our volunteer base.

EU: So these volunteers, then, were the ones that actually worked with the students or the young people?

DJ: Yes, that is true. We delivered the program though volunteers. Now, that doesn't mean that the county agents at that time didn't have that interaction with the young people but we were primarily involved with young people through the developmental experiences that were being provided through the Extension Service and the 4-H program.

[3:45]

EU: You mentioned some of the programs - reaching out for people with disabilities. And that came through a parent?

DJ: Usually, seeing those needs came from parents who saw the benefit of their young people being involved in a group that developed not only their skills and knowledge but they also helped them develop their social skills and their interactive skills and their positive self-worth of being able to accomplish something. And trying to move young people that were in the disability - our first focus was in the areas of young people who had sight and hearing disabilities and then went further into those with physical disabilities and feeling good about themselves and being able to maximize their skills to

what their level is. And we had some wonderful volunteers who worked with those programs that demonstrated the ability to have the kind of patience and the ability to teach in that environment.

[5:05]

EU: I think one other area of programs that you worked in was with science?

DJ: In the sciences and science areas - introduced with the help of Cal Monroe who was on the state 4-H staff and Joe Capizzi who was an entomologist, we worked extensively with the introduction and expansion of an entomology program in science. We worked with the Department of Geology and had some wonderful leaders out of the Department of Geology to build and create a Geology program, both which were very science based.

Not to the extent of science being introduced through computer sciences as it is today. We didn't have that. We didn't even think about computers except when we did our graduate work (laughter) in those days. But we found there was a tremendous interest and inquisitiveness among young people in the sciences in those days and tried to take an advantage of that. And that led to some things with electrical programming and even though in the more mechanical arts, the woodworking program. We really had some basis of science when you started looking at working with different kinds of woods to accomplish certain kinds of finished products.

[6:40]

EU: Did you do some early work with computers, then? In county fair management?

DJ: I did. One of the things that I found early on in my career is that management of the county fair was a very time consuming and extensively involving of a lot of resources. And so, in about 1964 we started to introduce using the old FORTRAN system for the management of awards, placings and management of the fair activities. And we worked with the Oregon State University Computer Science Department at that time to build pretty simple type of program to do the tabulations and the printouts of

those records, to print their premium checks, to do a lot of the things that used to be done manually by both volunteers and office staff.

And so, that then led to utilization of scanning; we used a scanning system which was really perfected for enrollment; enrolling young people and having a statewide base of volunteers and youth in our database. And so, I would say, I guess I feel very pleased with the progress that was done.

And then another result that came from that is that there used to be a separate fair for the City of Portland and for Multnomah County and we brought those two together as one fair in sharing the same facilities and were able to manage that. And this electronic management allowed that to be an easy adjustment. You know, losing identity was tough for some people, but we used to call it the Multnomah County/City of Portland Fair and so it was a combined effort. We did some things separately and some things together.

[9:05]

EU: Being in an urban setting, did you reach out to different ethnic groups?

DJ: We did. The African American and the Asian populations were the two that were most prominent at that particular time that I was in the county. And we had a strong horticulture program in particular with our Asian population. But we also introduced in 1960 the 4-H Guide Dog Program and a lot of our leadership with the 4-H Guide Dog Program came out of the Asian community at that particular time.

And the Black community; we were able to reach in there with a lot of the arts, the vocal arts and the performing arts areas and we were somewhat effective with the home economics education programs with the African American audience. Much of the - I'm trying to think, I'm going to say that I think our first two county agents that they hired with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program in particular, were very, very effective in reaching the disadvantaged audiences and many of those were ethnic-based. But we did reach into those audiences.

I think it will always be a big challenge to be sure that we are flexible as an Extension Service to reach audiences because we need to understand that a lot of their values come from their culture and it's not all one cultural acceptance base. And so I think in most recent years there has been some very excellent work with the State 4-H office leadership into developing programs that reach a very broad section of the ethnic makeup of the state of Oregon.

[11:20]

EU: So with this wide variety of programming that you were doing in Multnomah County and Portland - this is an obvious question - you had the support of the people in Corvallis? They encouraged you to widen the types of programs?

DJ: They encouraged us and they were supportive. And where resources were available to help. But a lot of our resources for expansion of these programs, came through business and industry and special interest groups in the metropolitan area in Portland. The electrical program was very very strongly supported by Portland General Electric and by, well now it's PPL; or it was PPL at that time; now it's Pacific Power. We had strong support from some of the general...the old Meier & Frank Company and the Frank family was very supportive of the 4-H program. So we were able to build a support base for that.

The Farm Bureau was very effective in helping us with the gardening program and the horticultural program, livestock program. And this was true in all of the counties as we worked together to reach that broad audience. I think the biggest challenge we had is, and it's no different today, there's so much out there and you are limited by how much energy you had. And we had a group that was willing to work, but it took its toll in overextending yourself so you had to find ways to delegate and expand that effort. For an example, in Multnomah County we organized a camp committee and turned it over to volunteers to lead the camp. But the Interstate Exchange Program was turned over to volunteers who organized the activities. Much of the organization eventually in

Multnomah County for the fair were turned over to volunteers to lead. Now, they planned and worked with us, but we left that leadership to them.

[13:35]

EU: You just mentioned this International Exchange Program. Could you talk about that a little bit?

DJ: Well, under the leadership of Ruth Brasher and Lois Redman at Oregon State, and primarily Lois Redman, the IFYE program in Oregon had always been a strong program.

EU: And what's the IFYE program?

DJ: It was called the International Farm Youth Exchange, then it became the International 4-H Youth Exchange Program. And it had two dimensions. One, was young people from Oregon having the opportunity to go to other countries to live for a year with families and to share and learn the culture and the activities. The other was young people coming from the other countries to the United States.

I saw this and it was very successful in utilizing this program, not only to enrich the local communities but through the school system we were able to provide school programs with a foreign student telling about their country to enhance their world history. And at the same time, every IFYE that went abroad came back and spent six months reporting around the state of Oregon. So it wasn't just self-gratification, but there was the expectation that you would share your experience throughout the country.

Now that led to the 4-H Japanese Exchange Program where we became very involved in and there was the LEX program which was one program and then there was a LABO program and the UTREK program. Those are names from organizations in Japan and they all came during my time primarily when I was on the state staff. Groups came together to be managed and promoted and supported through what we call the 4-H Japanese Exchange Program. But it was a great experience for local families to have a

person from another country who may or may not know any English, most likely did not know any English, they knew English but they were afraid to speak it. But we found was that a great cultural learning experience for a whole family. But we expanded it into the schools, into the community. We tried to make it being more than just somebody coming to your home and just living there for a week to a month at a time.

[16:30]

EU: How many people would come every year?

DJ: Well, the ones that I'm closest to was when I was a specialist and we were bringing 100-140 up to 160 Japanese throughout the state. And in most counties, you would have no more than 20 and in a lot of cases five to ten young people. You would want to have enough mass so that those young people could relate with each other. Because this is a shock for them to live in the American culture, too.

EU: Were these high school students or college age?

DJ: All the way from nine years old up. The interesting thing about Japan is that they encourage their children to travel at a very, very early age. The majority of them are twelve. We had a few that were a little younger. I may have misquoted when I said nine, I think we should say 12 years old and older.

[17:40]

EU: Now, did you go yourself over to Japan as part of this exchange?

DJ: Yes, but that, again, was when I was a specialist providing statewide leadership for the international program. I had the opportunity to work on the LEX advisory committee.

EU: What is LEX?

DJ: LEX. It's a language institute program and the uniqueness about the LEX is that they learn multiple languages at the same time through memory and hearing and the young people that participated in that in Japan really become prolific in at least four or

five different languages. They are much more aggressive in that. And then I also worked with the 4-H Japanese Exchange Program for a number of years. And with the 4-H Japanese Exchange program, I did travel to Japan three times.

EU: Where in Japan did you go?

DJ: Well, all over. Actually, their offices are all in Tokyo and that's always where you would start. But then you would go to the other locales from the south to the north. They built the itinerary for you to travel and see it, and to support the program.

[19:05]

EU: So you said, your involvement with these exchange programs continued, then, when you were at the state level. So when did you make this change from Multnomah County?

DJ: When I went to Graduate School from 1969 to 1970, then Burton Hutton called me as I was nearing it and asked if I would come to the state 4-H staff as a specialist. Now my responsibilities at that particular time was going to be with the animal science and horticulture programs and so that was my responsibility when I came to Corvallis as a specialist.

EU: Okay, and that was in 1970, then?

DJ: In 1970, right.

EU: Did that continue to be your assignment, then?

DJ: Well, I was in that assignment from 1970 to 1980. And in 1980, I assumed the responsibility as State 4-H Program Leader and stayed in that position until 1992 when I went back to being the specialist to work with volunteer leader development, professional development and a number of other activities connected with the Extension program.

[20:20]

EU: So your family then, did you have children at this time?

DJ: We had children. They came to Corvallis; actually graduated from Crescent Valley High School here in Corvallis and both of our sons went on to get their degrees at different universities. And then we now have one family living in Arizona and the other one living in Portland.

[20:50]

EU: So, when you started as a specialist here in Corvallis, you said your responsibilities were horticulture and animal science.

DJ: And some older youth programming.

EU: So what kinds of things did you do then as part of that job?

DJ: Well, I think the biggest portion when I first came in was making sure that educational materials and the activities that support those programs were the best for youth development and the program. Early on, again, carrying out what I saw as the result of having young people and adults involved, we introduced the utilization of what we called statewide development committees and had volunteers and youth from throughout the state who served on those committees. The committees usually met at least twice a year and in some cases depending upon all of the activities of those committees up to four times a year. They had their own chairman and they had their own secretaries.

As specialist, I worked with several of those over the years but the other faculty members had their development committees, too. The very first one was the horse program, followed by the livestock program. Home economics came in and then we had horticulture development committees and we had expressive arts committee. Several of them and that still exist today; the concept of involving the clientele in the design of the educational materials.

The other thing was an observation that in my specialist years I saw was that I could not be an expert in all the subject matter and a lot of the early literature and the volunteer leader development materials were being done by faculty members in the 4-H Youth Development unit. And so we were able to build a very, very strong relationship, especially in the College of Home Economics and in the College of Agriculture where the subject matter specialists – the Dean Frischknechts, the John Landers, the Joe Capizzis, the people in horticulture, home economics, all of those would assume a responsibility to help design educational materials for a youth audience so that was very critical for us to be able to stay ahead of the game and to stay on the leading edge. So I think that was probably one of the initial big advancements that we were able to accomplish. And during that time, the first few years with Burton Hutton's support, but then with Joe Meyer's, who was my predecessor as State 4-H Program Leader, was that to really encourage and support that kind of a structure for development of program.

EU: And so county agents and 4-H members were also part of this?

DJ: Yes. We always had juniors and seniors. We offered the opportunities for juniors and seniors to be part of that process to help design experiences for those that followed them.

[24:30]

EU: What were some of the programs that grew out of this committee work and the areas that you moved into, for example?

DJ: Well, let me give you a few examples. One of the things that we noticed that we had judges at county fairs making a big impact, positively and negatively with the young people and the families by what they did. So we organized and offered judges training to help them understand the objectives of the 4-H program, how to communicate and interact with young people and with adults. How to do the job of judging in a positive way rather than just saying this is first, second, third or fourth; or this is a blue, red or

white and leaving it at that. And I think the fair competition was improved significantly with that.

And then with Barbara Sauer coming on the State 4-H Staff, worked with her very closely in the introduction of interview judging rather than judging and examining the products and being isolated, just in a room, here's all the items, We started to introduce interview judging which was most effective at the county fair level, not a the state fair level, because it is hard for people to come in, but the activities of presentations, the cooking contests, the judging contests, all were done where we would get a two-way interchange with the participants and the evaluators. So I think in that particular area that's one of them.

The second area that I think, that I felt I was involved in significantly; we introduced through the cooperative efforts of the Oregon 4-H Foundation and at that time Standard Oil Company, now Chevron, who provided the funding, we introduced what we called the 4-H Community Pride/Community Service programming efforts and we were able to establish a curriculum that involved young people learning to make a grant proposal and to do a particular project in the communities where they lived. That particular program has been successful enough that it has really spread across the United States in a number of states. Primarily with the very strong financial support of the Chevron Chemical Company.

[27:25]

EU: How did you do the training, then? Were there camps or workshops?

DJ: Well, we had Community Pride conferences.

EU: In Corvallis, or where did you meet?

DJ: Well, we had them in Bend and we had them in Corvallis and we had them in Salem and we had them in different locations. They were a statewide conference where counties could select an adult as well as a team of youth. One adult/team of

youth who would come and give training in the areas of how to identify, how to plan, how to respond to community interests and needs, and how to carry them out. And then each of those teams, the early work was each of those teams then could submit a proposal to the State 4-H Office and the 4-H Foundation, for the funding to help support it. Now in every case, they had to have local funding, also. It wasn't just a full grant but it was, you might call it "seed money" for that identity. And I think out of that came a real focus on that community service should be part of every 4-H member's experience.

Then we introduced the 4-H Ambassador Program. The 4-H Ambassador Program was designed to build leadership with freshmen through seniors to build their strengths. We tied to that, rather than selecting young people for National 4-H Congress and National 4-H Conference, and so on, strictly by an application basis and their record books, we introduced the use of an interview process. And so we had that group of people as well as other participants in the 4-H Ambassador Training Program which was a statewide program and this was held, it started out at Oregon State but then we moved it to McMinnville at Linfield College where we could bring in speakers and do training in a number of areas that led to leadership development. A number of our county agents in Oregon were key people in that teaching that aspect of our program.

EU: When you talked about the Pride Program, for example, I should think one of the advantages was; they applied for a grant and were then able to carry it out. So they saw the whole....was this part of the plan?

DJ: This was part of the plan. They would develop skills in the training, they would go back and introduce a community service project at a club level and at the county level, whatever fit in their situation; carry it out so they could see the finished project.

[30:25]

EU: This was in the '70s and '80s? Were the types of the programs and community activism very much a part of this time? I mean, I'm thinking like with Tom McCall and the environmental program and some of these new social interests that were happening in this state?

DJ: Two governors of the state of Oregon, Tom McCall being one, Mark Hatfield the other one, who were great supporters of the 4-H program and they were strong encouragers. The introduction of the Community Pride Program actually featured Tom McCall in that particular programming effort, when we introduced it with two 4-H members doing the official kick off of the community pride program for Oregon.

And then, another aspect - mentioning Tom McCall, leads me to another one which is Glenn Klein, who I think you know. Glenn Klein, when he was county agent in Jackson County, he introduced with Nancy Rand, the 4-H Guide Dog Program. During the time I was on the state 4-H staff we expanded that program significantly. But one of the real problems with the guide dog program was there was a great deal of difficulty of socializing the dogs in public buildings, in public locations. So with the help of Tom McCall and with a number of legislators, I was fortunate enough to be able to get the law passed that would allow guide dogs in training in all public buildings and all in businesses and they helped to design the very first card-carrying guide raiser cards to gain admission. That not only affected, we had volunteer leaders make arrangements then to fly the dogs on planes, to take the dogs on busses, you'll see them on campuses going into classrooms, they are guide dogs in training. And today they are the only group that had that public access from that particular effort.

Here you had a problem, you went to it, you found a way to have it accomplished and with the help of a lot of good volunteer leaders, Maryanne Fennemore of Multnomah County, Mrs. Johnson from Washington County, Nancy Rand from down in Josephine County, a lot of individuals who worked together to work through that process to help bring that about.

EU: Let's take a little break here.

DJ: Okay.

[33:35]