

97 (First interview – Linda Minor)
98
99 Interviewer: Linda Stiles-Taylor (LT)
100 Interviewee: Linda Minor (LM)
101
102 LT: (first part is cut off) ...for nearly 10 years. So she's a woman of the 90's and of Forest Grove
103 City Library staff. Most recently became a reference librarian, but talk about when you first
104 came to the library Linda. What brought you here and what was your position? What was the
105 library like?
106
107 LM: Well, I worked part-time when I first came. And there were a lot, still are, quite a few part-
108 time people here. But I came because I wanted to work at the library and I liked the flexibility of
109 being part-time. I also was attracted by the particular job I was given which was a combination
110 of several tasks that had been performed by various different people and then were all put
111 together into one position. So I had a lot of variety at my job. And I think that happened because
112 the library was experiencing a lot of growth at that time. For instance, they had just started using
113 a collection agency and that took a lot of time. And just the amount of everything that was
114 happening was increasing and it was more than could be handled people that were doing it, so...
115
116 LT: We had automation at that point; we had the "old" WILJ as we now call it.
117
118 LM: Yes, that was new to me to be working with computers but I picked it up fairly quickly and
119 enjoyed it. And it was still new enough to the library when I came that a lot of time was spent
120 helping people adjust to the idea that the old card catalog was indeed gone. And even today, 10
121 years after I came, people walk in the door that haven't been here for a long time and ask for the
122 card catalog. (LT laughs) It still always amazes me but
123
124 LT: The disappointment (laughing), tell them it is no more. A sad task you must do.
125 Well you've always been a reader too, right?
126
127 LM: Oh of course. I was an English major my first year of college and read so much American
128 and world literature that I finally switched to being a French major (laughs), and didn't read a
129 book for at least 10 years after college (both laugh). And then realized how much I had missed it.
130 I do like to read fiction but I also enjoy non-fiction, and I was just delighted to realize that I
131 didn't need to buy books. I could get just about anything I wanted to read at the library, or
132 through the library.
133
134 LT: And then as the 90's wore on, you became sort of the cutting edge in terms of entry into the
135 whole library profession, in the first staff person to...
136

137 LM: Yes I realized fairly early on, that after seeing what everybody in the library did, that I
138 really wanted to be a reference librarian because that was where the fun and the challenge was, I
139 thought. At least for me. So I decided to go to library school with my husband's encouragement
140 and my problem was I was working. And by then I was working full-time and I liked my job and
141 I couldn't find a library program any closer than... Well the closest one was Seattle and it was
142 two-years away from home deal. Same with programs in California or in Arizona. So when I
143 heard about one that the University Of Illinois was offering over the internet I became very
144 interested in that. And that's indeed what I ended up doing. And it was a good thing, because
145 while our library system was not yet on the internet we were heading that way and just the
146 experience of having to use the internet so much was very valuable for me. And I learned how to
147 even do my own website and everything in library school so that was good. I'm glad I did it that
148 way. I did have to go to Illinois, eight times (laughs), and I spent a couple of weeks there twice,
149 so I don't feel like I, you know, totally missed the campus experience. But it was different doing
150 it on the internet. I had live classes with my classmates being in similar positions as myself. So
151 my classmates were all over the country to begin with, and towards the end of my 2-1/2 years
152 there were some in other countries that were taking this program. So in a way it was enriching to
153 have even a broader perspective than had I gone there and just had local input, local experiences.
154 There were some very good things about that whole experience, I think.

155
156 LT: So what did that do for you in terms of, you say you got a variety of perspectives, how did
157 that impact the way you view the Forest Grove community and the Forest Grove Library's role?
158 How does that compare to...?

159
160 LM: Well I was very interested to hear about adult programming or policies around collection
161 development or access. You name it, whatever. I had been at this library in Forest Grove, long
162 enough to know the score, exactly why we did things the way we did them here, and then to
163 compare them with what was going on in other libraries, made me feel very, very fortunate to be
164 working here.

165
166 LT: What are some of the specifics of why you felt fortunate compared to other libraries? The
167 policies that were different?

168
169 LM: Yeah, yeah. I was surprised, somewhat, to find issues of censorship and overdue fine,
170 excessive overdue fine policies. And, things like that.

171
172 LT: You mean at other libraries they were doing censorship, (LM: Yes) as opposed to here
173 there's a very strong intellectual freedom (LM: Yes, exactly) policy? And we don't charge fines
174 and haven't for many, many, many, many, many, many years, right?

175
176 LM: I'd pipe up and say this is the way we do it and they would just be amazed (both laugh).
177 And I thought, "oh, don't all libraries do this?". It was an eye-opener.

178
179 LT: I suppose having no theft-detection device was like, a rarity in the 90's, trusting patrons?

180
181 LM: Yes but I think that, part of that, comes from being a smaller library too. I think when you
182 grow there comes a point when sometimes you have to make changes.

183
184
185
186
187
188
189
190
191
192
193
194
195
196
197
198
199
200
201
202
203
204
205
206
207
208
209
210
211
212
213
214
215
216
217
218
219
220
221
222
223
224
225
226
227
228

LT: What about the general role of the library in the community? Did you have a sense of how Forest Grove might be the same or different from other comparable sized libraries?

LM: Well I think the role of the library is similar in most communities. The big debate of course, at the time I was in library school and since then, has been, is the role of the library changing because the technology in the library is changing. And very clearly we kept answering that question over and over again “no”. It’s a place for the community to gather and to both recreate and find information, and that hasn’t changed. And basic to that is the idea of equal and free access for people.

LT: The Rogers City Library from, you know, when it was Rogers City Library, the whole idea of having a free restroom into perpetuity was such a guiding factor and it sort of had this kind of open ambiance from the get-go and as library use may have developed along different lines because that wasn’t what they were established around, was the openness, the community, the service orientation

LM: That’s probably true, yeah.

LT: It sort of transmuted over the years into, but still a strong component of what we do.

LM: Yes it’s very, when you walk into this library, it’s very welcoming. I always have thought that, before I worked here and I hear that from my patrons frequently that it’s inviting, it’s warm, it’s welcoming and that’s a good feeling.

LT: Now you’re a long time Forest Grove resident. (LM: Yes.) What year did you come to this community?

LM: I came to Pacific University as a freshman in 1967. And of course at the time the library was tiny, Rogers Library on the corner there at 21st and College Way. And I didn’t use it because Pacific had a brand new large library with plenty of room for study which is usually what I did at the library (laughs). The dorm was too noisy. So I didn’t use the Rogers library, hardly at all. But when this building was built then I began to come.

LT: And at that point were you coming with your family or was that...?

LM: Well yes, yes. My children came to story time.

LT: As little preschoolers? (LM nods: yes) Is it that kind of open your eyes to the possibilities that as a career working here?

LM: No, oddly enough no. I was a school teacher until I had my children and then I was, I have a lot of interests and my interests were taking me in other directions. I brought my children here because I wanted them to be readers. And that’s why. I encouraged them to read and I read to them a lot at home. But no, it never occurred to me, and you know when I did start working here later it was so obvious to me that this is where I should have been all along. But, I don’t know, I

229 think as a profession we need to encourage people more to think of librarianship as a career. I'd
230 never even heard about it or thought about it, you know.

231
232 LT: Best kept secret in all of the world. (LM smiles: I guess, I guess) The joys of being a public
233 librarian. And you're very, you have a lot of roots in the community, you're very active in a lot
234 of different ways. What do you hear from people about the fact that you're a librarian here?

235
236 LM: Well, when I went through the internet program people were very interested to hear about
237 that, because it is kind of the trend of higher education I think, at least for graduate school. And
238 who knows maybe college in general in the future. So I had a lot of support from people in the
239 community. They were always asking me how it was going and what it was like and people
240 identify me now with the library, even though I've had other, I was a business owner in the
241 community and like I said a school teacher, very active, I used to be very active in one of the
242 churches here. So a lot of people know me in different capacities, but now they see me and its
243 library, they know that. And they often just want to tell me how much they like the library, how
244 great it is. Or they want to tell me 'Oh I have an overdue book' and 'I'll bring it back tomorrow'
245 (laughs).

246
247 LT: And what kinds of trends do you see in terms of, I guess, in the 90's when you look at the
248 internet and the things that people come here for. Do you find it most people feel somewhat
249 mystified by the direction things are going or does it just seem to be a natural to them that we're
250 going along the path towards the future with the internet?

251
252 LM: I think the answer there lies with the age of the person that you're talking about. There were
253 some, shall we say, older folks who after 10-12 years of resisting the online computer system
254 were finally attempting it, and starting to learn it and get comfortable with it. And now here we
255 are in the second generation of the online system and we're all flummoxed again (laughs). And
256 there are a few people who never wanted to learn it. But of course the people, middle aged
257 people generally and younger, are doing just fine with it. So I think it just depends on what
258 you're used to, and how long you've used to library in your lifetime, how open you are to trying
259 new things. A lot of times people, I noticed, get started with computers because they have
260 grandchildren or other relatives that have email and they want to email each other. And once
261 they get over that hurdle of using a computer for something then they're more likely to want to
262 learn to use the library system. But it is a big hurdle and it's something we need to be concerned
263 about.

264
265 LT: And really the 90's, one of the big events of the 90's certainly was changing to the Polaris
266 automation system (LM: yes) and all the impact. (LM nodding: yes at the end of the 90's) You
267 want to say a little more about what Polaris is and what it's meant?

268
269 LM: Well Polaris took the online system into a different dimension using, what's it called, a
270 GUI, a graphical user interface. Which just means it comes through the internet and makes it
271 pretty (laughs) and you can get all kinds of things on the same connection, such as different
272 databases as well as the library catalog, and just plain straight internet. So it has tremendous
273 potential, it's very versatile. But still so new that of course, you've probably heard this from
274 other people who have given there opinions about this, but it was a very, very difficult

275 adjustment because the software was not up to snuff yet when we began using it. It really wasn't
276 ready yet.

277
278 LT: And we were, this library, was the first library in the United States that was part of a large
279 network to attempt to use this cutting edge technology.

280
281 LM: Yes, yes exactly. I guess it had been used successfully with a single library system. But
282 because of the complexities of being part of a 12 library system and everybody having their own
283 little idiosyncrasies, you know. All the things that had to be kept track of for the different
284 libraries made it very complicated.

285
286 LT: What other things, when you think of the 90's, what other major events have impacted
287 library service here?

288
289 LM: Well there's been, of course, the addition of new formats, which was kind of big decision at
290 the time, now it seems so obvious. But, for example, to add CDs for music was a big decision.
291 Videos were already here before I came, but they had just made the decision to add CDs in the
292 early 90's. And then following that, the CD-ROM computer software was another "should we or
293 shouldn't we", Will this be a trend, will people check it out? It's difficult to know sometimes
294 what's going to fly. But we tend to look at the larger libraries in the system and they usually are
295 the first ones to try it and if it seems successful then we follow. Books on tape certainly have
296 grown.

297 Another area would be the parenting resources. We added a parenting resource table in the early
298 90's, with grant money, and that has the homeschooling resources in it which are used a lot in
299 this library. And that is certainly a growing field, people homeschooling need the library for their
300 curriculum resources.

301
302 LT: And there's a lot of, certainly, back and forth in the community between the schools and the
303 library, the 90's at time the big event, uh. (LM laughs) Do you want to address that issue? (LM:
304 You're talking about the bussing?) The bussing, what that was about?

305
306 LM: Yes, yes. We, our school district went without bussing for a year.

307
308 LT: And that was right in the middle of the 90's, right?

309
310 LM: Yeah. Yeah. I don't remember exactly which year, but I think the mid-90's would be
311 accurate, '94, '95, somewhere in there. So that meant that there were children who got out of
312 school that lived a distance away that were not able to go home directly. They needed to be
313 picked up if they were to go home, but if their parents were working this wasn't always possible.
314 So the solution for many families was to tell their children to go to the library and they would
315 pick them up there at a later time, when they got off work. So as you can imagine we had many,
316 many school children at the library, not necessarily there to do library things. So it created a
317 problem for us, just in terms of the numbers of children that were unsupervised. And we had a lot
318 of back and forth with the school district. I remember the principals all being here one day just
319 kind of walking around and looking at the library, (laughing) I'm not sure what that
320 accomplished. But they knew it was an issue.

321
322
323
324
325
326
327
328
329
330
331
332
333
334
335
336
337
338
339
340
341
342
343
344
345
346
347
348
349
350
351
352
353
354
355
356
357
358
359
360
361
362
363
364
365
366

LT: It's like a president coming in after a national disaster (LM laughing: yes exactly) kind of, to view the wreckage. How many restless and unsupervised children can you pack into a public library?

LM: It was difficult, it was. There were times when we had to ask certain individuals to leave. But not too often. I think everybody kind of tried to work at making it be an ok thing, because it was temporary and we knew it. We got through it (laughs).

LT: Well, in addition to many of the other talents you've brought to bear at the library, you're also an accomplished musician. And I wanted to show a couple pictures now of your days at the library, and we'll talk a little more about that.

(Photo of musicians in library)

LT: Here you are in your capacity as a conductor at a holiday party, right?

LM: That would be accurate. I had a second part time job as a hand bell director at the United Church of Christ here in Forest Grove, and so I had access to the bells, the hand bells, and the choir chimes. And what you're seeing here is the staff, the library staff, playing Christmas songs with choir chimes at one of our Christmas potlucks.

LT: And you did something similar to that several times.

LM: Yes. It was a great favorite with, especially the younger set, but some of the parents of the children got really involved. Because you didn't have to read music the way I had it set up, you could just ring your bell and sing the song and it worked pretty well. This brings to mind another issue in the 90's and that was the fact that we had Christmas parties and the library had Christmas tree and all that. It was another issue that with the help of the ACLU we have changed our policy now and we do not decorate the library for specific religious holidays anymore. And if we have a faculty gathering it's a, it's basically a winter gathering or a holiday gathering. It's not, no longer a Christmas gathering.

LT: Good point.

(Photo of LM and two others)

LM: And this is, it might even be the same holiday gathering, I'm not sure. But what I liked about it is that we got to bring our families and the kids got to see the library after hours and they could run around and make noise and still enjoy the books too if they wanted to.

LT: So this is your son.

LM: This is our oldest son David, who was quite the reader. In third grade I remember him walking down the middle of the street reading a book on the way home from the bus. His principal lived, was just around the corner from us, and he came to the door quite concerned one day that David would get run over when he was read a book (laughing).

367 LT: True bibliophile.
368
369 LM: Definitely.
370
371 LT: And on your left is Barbara Denet??, formally children's' librarian.
372
373 (Photo from staff party)
374 LT: The staff has been notorious for parties, both public and staff parties. You're in the back row
375 on the right hand side here. And what event was this?
376
377 LM: This was a going away party for Laurie Klaus who is second from the left in the front.
378 Laurie worked here for several years and then decided she wanted to be a school teacher. So we
379 were sad to say goodbye but always happy to party. This party was at Barbara Denet's house.
380
381 (Photo of three staff in matching outfits)
382 LT: In addition to parties, everybody's always been game to dress up for an assortment of
383 occasions, including Summer Reading (laughs).
384
385 LM: This was the Catch the Wave theme for that year, somewhere in the mid-90's. I'm in the
386 middle and on my right is, or my left which would be the right in the picture, is Barbara Murphy.
387 And on the other side of me is Vicki Cook who was on the staff. Barbara Murphy is a wonderful
388 volunteer here at the library and has also served many years on the library commission.
389 What I liked about that particular year was the Friends decided, the Friends of the Library
390 decided to buy everybody a T-shirt, everybody on staff, so the T-shirts were provided and the
391 hats. Colleen bought us all sailor hats so we're quite dressed for the part.
392
393 LT: In some of the other interviews we've seen some of the wild hats when people decorated
394 their own, but these were more, these were more sedate.
395
396 LM: Yes these were very sedate and everybody wore the same hat.
397
398 LT: Well you've made wonderful contributions over the years you've been here and exciting
399 going into the new millennium as a ref (interview with LM cuts off)
400
401