

97 (First interview – Linda Minor)

98

99 Interviewer: Linda Stiles-Taylor (LT)

100 Interviewee: Linda Minor (LM)

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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?

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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" WILI 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 was 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 perceptive 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 LT: What about the general role of the library in the community? Did you have a sense of how  
185 Forest Grove might be the same or different from other comparable sized libraries?  
186  
187 LM: Well I think the role of the library is similar in most communities. The big debate of course,  
188 at the time I was in library school and since then, has been, is the role of the library changing  
189 because the technology in the library is changing. And very clearly we kept answering that  
190 question over and over again "no". It's a place for the community to gather and to both recreate  
191 and find information, and that hasn't changed. And basic to that is the idea of equal and free  
192 access for people.  
193  
194 LT: The Rogers City Library from, you know, when it was Rogers City Library, the whole idea  
195 of having a free restroom into perpetuity was such a guiding factor and it sort of had this kind of  
196 open ambiance from the get-go and as library use may have developed along different lines  
197 because that wasn't what they were established around, was the openness, the community, the  
198 service orientation  
199  
200 LM: That's probably true, yeah.  
201  
202 LT: It sort of transmuted over the years into, but still a strong component of what we do.  
203  
204 LM: Yes it's very, when you walk into this library, it's very welcoming. I always have thought  
205 that, before I worked here and I hear that from my patrons frequently that it's inviting, it's warm,  
206 it's welcoming and that's a good feeling.  
207  
208 LT: Now you're a long time Forest Grove resident. (LM: Yes.) What year did you come to this  
209 community?  
210  
211 LM: I came to Pacific University as a freshman in 1967. And of course at the time the library  
212 was tiny, Rogers Library on the corner there at 21<sup>st</sup> and College Way. And I didn't use it because  
213 Pacific had a brand new large library with plenty of room for study which is usually what I did at  
214 the library (laughs). The dorm was too noisy. So I didn't use the Rogers library, hardly at all. But  
215 when this building was built then I began to come.  
216  
217 LT: And at that point were you coming with your family or was that...?  
218  
219 LM: Well yes, yes. My children came to story time.  
220  
221 LT: As little preschoolers? (LM nods: yes) Is it that kind of open your eyes to the possibilities  
222 that as a career working here?  
223  
224 LM: No, oddly enough no. I was a school teacher until I had my children and then I was, I have a  
225 lot of interests and my interests were taking me in other directions. I brought my children here  
226 because I wanted them to be readers. And that's why. I encouraged them to read and I read to  
227 them a lot at home. But no, it never occurred to me, and you know when I did start working here  
228 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 LT: It's like a president coming in after a national disaster (LM laughing: yes exactly) kind of, to  
323 view the wreckage. How many restless and unsupervised children can you pack into a public  
324 library?

325

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

329

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

333

334 (Photo of musicians in library)

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

336

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

341

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

343

344 LM: Yes. It was a great favorite with, especially the younger set, but some of the parents of the  
345 children got really involved. Because you didn't have to read music the way I had it set up, you  
346 could just ring your bell and sing the song and it worked pretty well.

347 This brings to mind another issue in the 90's and that was the fact that we had Christmas parties  
348 and the library had Christmas tree and all that. It was another issue that with the help of the  
349 ACLU we have changed our policy now and we do not decorate the library for specific religious  
350 holidays anymore. And if we have a faculty gathering it's a, it's basically a winter gathering or a  
351 holiday gathering. It's not, no longer a Christmas gathering.

352

353 LT: Good point.

354

355 (Photo of LM and two others)

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

359

360 LT: So this is your son.

361

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

366

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  
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