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322 Interviewer: Linda Stiles-Taylor (LT)

323 Interviewee: Michael Smith (MS)

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326

327 LT: And you had finished your tenure here

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329 MS: In '85.

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331 LT: '85. So, I'd like to begin. You were still in library school when you got this job,
332 right?, and still hadn't....

333

334 MS: Right, I saw, there was an ad on the bulletin board at the library school at Berkeley
335 and it said that this town in Oregon was trying to get a director and they said, director and
336 city librarian, it was then. And they described, they said they wanted somebody that
337 could help build the new library. And so, my wife and I thought that was a pretty good
338 thing and so we had a call, set up an appointment and we came up around the 4th of July
339 weekend in '74, and we looked around and we thought the town was nice and we were
340 thoroughly exposed to what the library was about, and what was going on in the library.
341 The first person we talked to in town was Ivan Burnett and he was the acting city
342 manager then. And we sat down and talked with him, my wife and I both, Liz and I both,
343 for a lengthy amount of time in the morning and then late in the morning we went and
344 talked to the interim library board, and to get the background on that. What had
345 happened was before the summer of '74, the library board had worked, negotiated an
346 arrangement with the landlord at the then and now post office, a man named Joe
347 Vanderbilt. And they wanted to take over that building, and they wanted to buy the
348 building. The lease was about up for the post office and Joe was looking around for
349 somebody else to perhaps purchase it. They took their proposal to the city council and
350 the city council and the then, new city manager, Tony Baldwin, who'd only been on the
351 premises a week or two, said Oh no, we think we can do better than that building. The
352 library board was very upset. The library board was appointed under the state law which
353 allows libraries to be created, boards appointed who have full administrative rights over
354 the library and that's still the arrangement they have in Hillsboro, but not in many
355 libraries in Oregon anymore. So, as a result of this meeting where the city council said
356 no, the library board resigned, the librarian resigned, perhaps not in that order, but the
357 librarian was a fellow named Bill Gregory who was the second professional librarian that
358 the library had, and the interim library commission was appointed to help hire the new
359 librarian and also to make recommendations about the future governance of the library.

360

361 LT: Was there a sense, in some of the things I read they talked about them being mad
362 about the misappropriation of funds because the city council decided to spend library
363 money without their authorization on an appraisal of the real estate involved in the post
364 office.

365

366 MS: That may be, you know, I don't remember that. And what I should say in regard to
367 everything I'm saying here is that I'm working from memory. I didn't really go back to
368 the sources to take a look at it. I'm really working out of memory here. That may be

369
370 LT: That's fine. I just, it was one piece that came up in the paper.

371
372 MS: Well, another thing that resulted from library board resigning was that the city
373 council took \$100,000 out of the light fund and put it in a special library fund. That had
374 happened before I arrived too. So that was part of the setting.

375
376 LT: Ooooo, So that they would be sure to deliver something in terms of a new building
377 that was....

378
379 MS:Yeah, so there would be some seed money in there for a new building. So
380 anyway the interim library board what was expected of them, I think, and what I was told
381 about, and that was to recommend that a library commission be created and that they be
382 an advisory board, not a governing board, and that they realize where the real authority
383 was and where the real money was, was of course, the city council. The library had no
384 other sources of income except the city general fund. So that was approved and that went
385 into effect in the fall of '74. And some of the original library board members were on the
386 interim board as well, and some of the people I remember particularly were Willetta
387 Matson and Bobby Wish and Carolyn Howard who was the women's dean at PU at the
388 time, and Beverly Young. And there were some others, I'm sorry I don't remember the
389 names.

390
391 LT: Now was Willetta on the original one. Did she transfer over?

392
393 MS: She was, I'm pretty sure. She was on the interim board.

394
395 LT: She was the chairman, chairperson.

396
397 MS: And Willetta, I want to mention more than once here, was a tremendous help to me.
398 She was a former librarian. She in fact had created some libraries in Alaska, where she
399 and her husband went during the war. And he to set up airstrips and airports all over the
400 state, and she got to work in libraries, and she actually was in on the founding of the
401 Anchorage Public Library. And the thing about both those people, they knew what
402 pioneering was about and they knew what needed to happen to have changes happen to
403 really get things going.

404
405 LT: And they were both tough and gracious.

406
407 MS: They were. They were wonderful people. So, the library commission got started, I
408 started to learn what it was like to be a city person, you know. One of the parts of the
409 deal was that the city librarian would also be a department head of the library department.
410 The library department at the time had two full time employees, and that was the city
411 librarian and one clerk.

412

413 LT: That was it??

414

415 MS: Yeah, and then we had a part-time student that came in, usually hired out of the
416 high school for their senior year, to come and work half time, so it was 2-1/2 FTE. Had
417 fairly extensive hours, I think similar to what they had been for years and years.

418

419 LT: And did you just see all this as an exciting challenge at the time, or did you not???

420

421 MS: That's what I thought at the time, yeah (laughter). I was attracted to the idea of
422 kind of running my own show, and I thought that it had lots of possibilities, and I liked
423 the town. Both Liz and I liked the town. We had two sons

424

425 LT: ...That were quite young at the time...

426

427 MS: ..Quite young, they were two and six, umm, so I started to learn all the things about
428 being a manager in the city, learning about budgeting and so on, and along in that first
429 year as I recall, around that time, they hired a new city manager, who was Dan Durig,
430 also known as the Eastern Wonder Boy. At the time, remember it was the '70s, and it
431 was a particularly rough time I thought here, in all of Oregon, but here. There was some
432 growth going on, there was inflation, there was a recession going on at the same time,
433 and we had a limitation on how much the amount of money we could collect in property
434 taxes could grow, and that was 6% a year, and we had inflation that was running through
435 the '70s was more than that. The schools and so forth, everything in the town was
436 starting to grow and the city council, they recognized that they had a problem on their
437 hands because what they considered, when they got right down to it, no tax base. And in
438 the '70s, the late '70s, after '75, we started having to go to annual levy elections to make
439 sure the city had money to operate, especially the general fund. And there was a need for
440 some capital improvements too. The City Hall needed some work on it, the Police
441 Department was tucked in a little closet inside City Hall. The library had been in the
442 same building since it was rebuilt after the fire in the teens I guess it was, but that same
443 little store front. So there were a lot of capital needs and park needs too, and the fire hall
444 needed work as well. So one of the projects the city got involved in, along with trying to
445 keep going, was there was a federal grant program that was one of these counter-cyclical
446 make work programs, it was under the Nixon administration. And we had at the time had
447 a young intern, fellow named Art Heemstra, came in and he put together the program for
448 that. He read what was needed by the law, thoroughly. The city council approved the
449 purchase of a piece of property where the police department is now, and we were able to
450 go ahead and make application for it, and in six weeks we hired an architect and they had
451 a proposal that was three inches thick to send in saying what the building would look
452 like, how many people it employed doing what, for how great a length of time, and we
453 were able to win \$2.4 million.

454

455 LT: So this the police and fire building?

456

457 MS: It was to build the library, to build the police building, to refurbish the fire
458 department, to build the parking lot between the library and the city hall and to refurbish
459 the city hall.

460
461 LT: This was major.

462
463 MS: Yeah, and in that same round of funding, the City of Portland got nothing. Neil
464 Goldschmidt was upset.

465
466 LT: Oh, man. The voters were grumpy.

467
468 MS: No, we didn't have to go to the voters at all for this.

469
470 LT: This was all grant money.

471
472 MS: All grant money.

473
474 LT: 100%?

475
476 MS: 100%. No bond, no nothing. So that was quite a coup actually. So, that was
477 actually in about 1976, or so. But, when we were in the old library there was a lot of
478 things that I thought were very important, where the groundwork was laid. One of those
479 was the children's program. We had a volunteer program that grew and grew because the
480 volunteers invested their time in it, two of the main volunteers were Ann Dondero and
481 Barbara Dunnette who went on to be our children's librarian, when we moved into the
482 new library. And so that was really important, it really helped the library a great deal.

483
484 LT: Before your time, children's services were sporadic, if that, kind of not.

485
486 MS: Yeah, yeah. It all depended on volunteers, it really did. Of course, there was a
487 little tiny space to work in. But we worked around the building and inside, and took
488 things to the park sometimes, and so on. And Barbara and Ann had a great deal to do
489 with getting that going.

490
491 And then of course when we were there too was the beginning of the cooperative starting
492 in Washington County. And the main idea there was, we got some grant money and the
493 staff, whatever staff we had, was really Donna Selle, who went on to become the first
494 coordinator of the library cooperative. The problem we had was 2/3 of the county was
495 where the population was, and it was a suburban area, and the library service was
496 provided by the cities within their own borders. So, we had this big suburban population
497 and we had to charge them a fee and the amount of support the cities could provide was
498 so little compared to the need of this larger population. So we had a lot of catching up to
499 do for our growing county.

500
501 LT: There was only a few libraries that really were seriously established in terms of the
502 city libraries. Cornelius had one in the little fire department, right?

503

504 MS: Yeah, they had a small library. Forest Grove was in the storefront across the street
505 from Pacific University.

506

507 LT: Hillsboro was one that actually had a nice.....

508

509 MS: Hillsboro had a Carnegie library that was built in the teens, and then they moved in
510 1975 to Shute Park.

511

512 LT: Was that 1975? I thought Shute Park was older than that. So they were brand new.

513

514 MS: Yeah, brand new. And Beaverton library was in a building that was built for a
515 library, but it was very small, and it was next to their fire facility, right around the site of
516 the new library, the library that opened this fall on Hall Blvd. And then Cedar Mill had a
517 small volunteer library, I think.

518

519 LT: I thought they had a bookmobile truck or something.

520

521 MS: That's right, that's right. They started there, and then Bales Thriftway ended up
522 funding a place for them to meet and actually got them four walls. That's right, because
523 it was cooperative. In fact, I think they borrowed that, or rented that bookmobile from
524 Multnomah County, as I recall, for a \$1 a year or something like that.

525

526 LT: I think Sherwood had the little basement library under city hall that was tiny...

527

528 MS: ...and the Tigard library was tucked in an old commercial building just stashed
529 away in there. It was very small too.

530

531 LT: With just junky furniture and everything broke down.

532

533 MS: Everything donated and maybe one or two employees, tops. Of course at the time
534 Tigard had about the same population as Forest Grove had. Beaverton was 50,000 or so.
535 Hillsboro was about 20,000 when they built their library.

536

537 LT: And Banks, didn't Banks have, share space with the school?

538

539 MS: They did, they were in the high school, but I am not sure when that started, but that
540 was around the beginning of the cooperative, too. Yeah.

541

542 LT: And what was the relationship between the librarians prior to the development of the
543 cooperative?

544

545 MS: They met now and then, they met now and then, but the great driving force was the
546 idea to finally get some to cooperate and to broaden the tax base. We just knew we had
547 to do that and we needed a way to do it. So, we were able to get a grant, an LSCA grant,
548 a federal grant through the state library for library development and hired a consultant

549 whose name was Phyllis Dalton, she was from California, had been an assistant state
550 librarian in California. She, of course, did all these meetings and so on, and talked to all
551 the managers a great deal and elected officials, and her recommendation was to build a
552 county-wide service based on existing facilities with a county-wide tax, so that basically
553 the county would collect the tax from the library levy and pay the cities to serve anybody
554 from the county that came in the doors. And she also recommended some other
555 programs, one of which was an outreach program that was invented by Linda Stiles and
556 Jeff Haskin, two VISTA volunteers that worked out of the Forest Grove City Library,
557 when we were in the old library.

558

559 LT: That was a grant and we were recruited so it was all in place.

560

561 MS: Yeah, and VISTA volunteers were cheap labor.

562

563 LT: And we just were game to come on board.

564

565 MS: Yeah, and that was really important, and that has been a terrific part of the
566 cooperative's offerings ever since it really got off the ground and got some funding.

567

568 LT: Interestingly, when we interviewed Dave Pauli and he talked about how Forest
569 Grove had a large print collection before anybody else was even talking large print. It
570 was pretty substantial for the size of the library. You always had the perspective of
571 serving everybody and that was very fundamental from the get-go.

572

573 MS: We didn't have a very large budget. What sticks in my mind was about \$75,000 for
574 the whole library budget when I got there. So, the book budget was not large, but we did
575 have some standing orders for large print.

576

577 LT: Considering how small it was, you certainly had a good representation.

578

579 MS: But I didn't start that collection. That was started before I got here. We had a
580 standing order for that.

581

582 LT: Oh good.

583

584 MS: Also before I arrived, just before, in 1973, a friends group was established, called
585 Friends of the Forest Grove Library, because then nobody was quite sure what was going
586 to happen. It was suggested we move in with the Pacific Library, they didn't know what
587 the name of the place was going to be, so that's how it got its name, just Friends of the
588 Forest Grove Library, not public library, not city library. That group has been a terrific
589 boon to the library, the whole time it's been in existence. Win Walker (?) was one of
590 the most active originators of that group.

591

592 LT: So, when these forces were all sort of converging, when the suggestions first came
593 from Phyllis Dalton for this county wide service and this variety of programs, what kind
594 of reception did the community give that, the residents of Forest Grove, the city council

595 and what not. Were people saying "isn't this is a grand idea" right from the get-go or
596 was that a struggle, or....

597

598 MS: I thought they bought into the idea on this side of the county, but because we didn't
599 have a big suburban population all around, the reception wasn't too enthusiastic. They
600 didn't have the pressure to provide that service that Beaverton did and they had more
601 people just outside their boundary that wanted that service and that's where it got the
602 greatest support really at the start was in the eastern county. And then, as we had to go
603 through many levies, it was always three year or five year levies, to keep that cooperative
604 going, and we only actually lost one levy that I can recall, and that was specifically for an
605 automated system which was too obscure I think for anybody to really vote for. But we
606 were successful in some very hard times, to get that and through the years the amount of
607 money collected on the levy increased, and it's become the major support for public
608 library service. And it has helped, and always a concern in municipalities is, when we
609 pay for our library, do we get enough from outside not to be double-taxing because
610 everybody in the county was taxed for that levy and the growth of the levy funds helped
611 to ameliorate the double taxation issues. It wasn't at the start and still isn't, the
612 cooperative isn't there to build libraries. That was discussed for a while but the idea has
613 been dropped since then. So it's still the responsibility of the cities to build their own
614 libraries, but the operating funds come from that county-wide tax base.

615

616 LT: So, Forest Grove was in place to get a new library even without the cooperative
617 then.

618

619 MS: Yes.

620

621 LT: But then as a result of the cooperative forming and the grant to build this building,
622 everything was sort of exploding at once.

623

624 MS: Yeah, everything came together and also the other libraries in the county too started
625 to grow quite a bit and it was that consistent enough operating funds from the county
626 cooperative that helped with that a great deal. And then another important addition to
627 our staff in the old library was Dave Pauli. He came to us and he was just a natural
628 librarian. He was a tremendous help. He was shortly writing articles for the newspaper,
629 book reviews and so forth. He loved to do reference work and he was just a tremendous
630 help.

631

632 LT: In those days, people weren't so picky about who did reference, right?

633

634 MS: Oh, right.

635

636 LT: It was still a relative rarity to have an MLS in libraries in those days. Numbers of
637 the libraries in the county didn't have, even their library directors weren't necessarily
638 holders of an MLS.

639

640 MS: That's correct. There were about maybe four in the whole county.

641

642 LT: So there was this whole shift towards professionalization.

643

644 MS: Yeah. That's right.

645

646 LT: And you ended up mentoring quite a few future librarians because...

647

648 MS: I did that because they came to work in the library and that was one of my greatest
649 pleasures of my whole time here, was doing that. And seeing this library grow was
650 really important and one of the objectives, of course, of the cooperative from the start
651 was that we thought that we could use an automated system to help us share our
652 materials. When the cooperative started, we put together a union catalog and what that
653 really amounted to was a card catalog that had one catalog card for every title held by
654 every library all in author order and it had little stamps on it for all the libraries that
655 owned it. Well, of course, you couldn't tell from that if it was checked out or anything,
656 so it was all a manual system done by paper. The libraries would call, and it was housed
657 at Pacific University, and I should say too, before I forget, Charlie Kemp, who was the
658 university librarian at the time, he was a tremendous help in forming the cooperative, to
659 no particular advantage to the university library or to him himself, but out of his
660 recognition of the need for library development over the whole county.

661

662 LT: So he housed the reference service for WCCLS and this union catalog in the Pacific
663 university library.

664

665 MS: Right. So the librarians stationed there would field these calls or these written
666 requests and they would see what library had it and they would send paper requests to the
667 library to send it to the library that wanted it. So, with this kind of a model we thought
668 well, we could do better. If we had better communications and we could really see what
669 was in the other libraries. And there were automated systems that could do that. So, we
670 knew that we could get a turnkey system. We could go to one vendor and they would sell
671 us all of the computer equipment, and they would sell us the software and would set it up
672 for us and would do the data conversion and all that stuff, a huge job, and we started
673 looking in the late 1970s but it wasn't until the mid-1980s that we were able to get the
674 money together to do it as a cooperative project that was out of the cooperative budget.
675 So, we were into the selection process and Donna Selle, who was the coordinator for the
676 cooperative, asked me if I would manage the project.

677

678 LT: And you have to say the reason was because you were one of the, even before we
679 began looking at an automated circulation system, you were one of the people who was
680 always on the cutting edge of trying to figure out how to use technology and understood
681 it and could figure out how to actually get it to run.

682

683 MS: Well, that's probably an overstating it. For example, I whined for years to get an
684 Apple computer and it took a change of city managers to actually get one. I was the first
685 city department head to use a spreadsheet and a computer to do my budget which was on
686 Visicalc on an Apple II.

687

688 LT: It's primitive by today's standards what you were doing, but by those standards, you
689 know, everybody else in the library world, a large proportion of them, were kind of in
690 shock, and going how are we ever going to shift into this technological age, and you were
691 in there with your running shoes, ready to go for it.

692

693 MS: Another thing we did that was computer based was we got a grant for a Spanish
694 collection for Hillsboro, Cornelius and Forest Grove. We wanted to put together some
695 kind of a list of that, so we actually used a database program that was available on that
696 Apple and we started typing the stuff in and it was a terrific learning experience for me to
697 find out what it takes to do that. That was interesting, but that was a good start for our
698 Spanish collection, for all those libraries actually.

699

700 LT: So Joe Matthews came in as a consultant....

701

702 MS: Yep, we hired a consultant from California, Joe Matthews, and he was quite an
703 authority, as it should be, and published quite a bit about automated systems for libraries
704 and so he was our consultant for this project and put together an RFP, mostly he did, and
705 we sent it out to the vendors that were available that could do this for us. We picked the
706 Dynix system which was fairly new at the time, in the mid '80s. And Donna had asked
707 me to be the project manager for this, so I was on loan to the county for a year and then I
708 extended for about four months, in 1985, and then I decided I wouldn't come back here.
709 In the meantime, when we moved to this library, one of the new employees that we hired
710 as a clerk was Colleen Winters and she had run the bookstore at PSU and she had very
711 good management skills and people skills, and so we got her involved in the library world
712 and she picked that up quickly. She decided to go to library school and she went to the
713 University of Arizona, and she came back and then I went and did this automation project
714 thing and she was the acting director through that. When I decided not to come back,
715 she wound up being appointed director of the library, and she has been here now a lot
716 longer than I was with the Forest Grove Library.

717

718 LT: One of the four people that you hired that ended up going to library school and
719 becoming librarians.

720

721 MS: Yeah, that's true.

722

723 LT: And so, some of the other things, when you look at your tenure, policies that Forest
724 Grove is known for in terms of their openness and their service, a lot of that dates back to
725 you.

726

727 MS: Well, we did reach a decision point in the fall of 1974, we were charging a penny a
728 day for overdue fines and we felt obliged to get the overdue notices out very promptly
729 because fines started to accrue over the two-day grace period or something like that and it
730 was only a two-week circulation period. So, we were making postcards and stuff and
731 sending them out and that was a big clerical burden, and we knew that we weren't
732 collecting as much in fines as we were expending on sending out the notices and doing all

733 that, so it occurred to me to ask the library commission: We could go two ways, we
734 could either raise the fine to cover the costs or we could reduce the effort we put into it
735 and do away with fines altogether. And no fines is still the policy, one of the few
736 libraries in the county.

737

738 LT: One of the few libraries in many areas.

739

740 MS: Yeah, that's true.

741

742 LT: The conscience fund was what it was named, which had an interesting impact on the
743 community. People would put a dollar into the conscience fund when their fine would
744 have been a couple of pennies.

745

746 MS: They would do that. It was okay. I think the goodwill worked, and of course, it
747 didn't mean you didn't have to bring it back. So we would charge people for the things
748 they didn't bring back and we did send them notices, too.

749

750 LT: You just stopped becoming such an adversarial relationship and more of a ...

751

752 MS: Right, right, and it improved relations, I think, between the people at the desk and
753 the people they dealt with, and I thought that was really important, I still do.

754

755 LT: When the new building was designed and developed, there was a decision made not
756 to put in a theft detection device.

757

758 MS: That's true, that's true. I think one of the things there, those devices are an easy
759 sell, you can just about get them any time, and I wasn't convinced about the loss rate and
760 how much was really walking out the door, so we did annual counts, where we counted
761 the little cards for everything that was checked out and we'd count everything that was on
762 the shelves and we could do it pretty quickly, in a few hours in the morning, and we
763 compared it to how many things we thought we should have, and we didn't think the loss
764 rate was enough to warrant a detection system, which are not cheap, and they become a
765 part of your everyday routine which can be a burden, I think.

766

767 LT: Every book that's processed has to have...

768

769 MS: Every book has to have a device in it and you have to run them through a machine
770 to deactivate the security strips in the book.

771

772 LT: So, it increases the time for check-out and check-in as well as all the people who
773 accidentally trigger the machine.

774

775 MS: So, it's not a one time expenditure in any way. Got to call people back who have
776 gone through the gate, and so on, and so forth.

777

778

779 BREAK IN TAPE
780
781 MS: (picture from newspaper of Mike Smith with beard)I sent it attached to my
782 application for the job, as I was required to do, and the part that's cropped off there is that
783 I'm wearing a sweatshirt, a Dizzy Gillespie for President sweatshirt that I got at the
784 Monterey Jazz Festival.
785
786 LT: (Laughter).... So you felt that if Forest Grove could handle this....
787
788 MS: If people could handle my hirsute appearance, then maybe I could talk my way into
789 the rest of it.
790
791 LT: Turned out to be a good match.
792
793 MS: Yeah, in fact people in the library, interim library commission said that they thought
794 it was time for a change at the library and I guess I looked like some kind of change. I
795 didn't talk like a mad man anyway.
796
797 MS: (photo of table, chairs, people) This is a work table in the Rogers City Library and
798 some of our volunteers are working there too.
799
800 LT: Barbara Dunnette's back and Dave Pauli at the table.
801
802 MS: And very limited working space in the stacks. We were very close together and
803 you could hardly work a book truck in between the stacks. And when we moved to the
804 new library, people said where did you get all the books?
805
806 LT: (Laughter)
807
808 MS: Once they were spread out and people could see them, they thought we had a whole
809 lot more. It was an immense improvement. The old library was just over 1700 square
810 feet and we occupy oh, 11,000 here, square feet.
811
812 LT: It wasn't new books?
813
814 MS: Absolutely not. No, we just moved them. (chuckles)
815
816 LT: (photo of outside of library) And this is what the library looked like at the time you
817 arrive.
818
819 MS: Yeah, yeah. Actually it was kind of a green color when I arrived and it had a neon
820 sign that said library that stuck out. You can see it in the old pictures.
821
822 LT: Ooh, so this is a refurbishment.
823

824 MS: Yeah, on the corner of 21st and College. You probably know some history of the
825 building. It burned down, it was rebuilt, a brick, block building. The roof particularly in
826 the area of the librarian's office way in the back of the building, there was a bad leak
827 there, the water would back up, and it still has a leak. Even today, and it belongs to
828 Pacific University. The building had had some work done on it before I arrived. Before
829 it had just an open ceiling and it had globe lights in it and it had some big electrical
830 heaters that sat in my office for quite a while before I just chucked them out. There was a
831 drop ceiling and forced air heating was added before I got there and neon lighting and so
832 there were some real improvements as far as that went.

833

834 LT: And this was located next to the Forest Grove Creamery that had been turned into
835 the Hope Food Co-op.

836

837 MS: Not at first, it was still the creamery when I arrived. It still had all the creamery
838 equipment and so forth. I did have the owner of that building come over and give me a
839 tour to just see what a library this would be if we just knocked out the wall and add his
840 building in too. We didn't pursue that and it became the Hope Co-op.

841

842 LT: Was that after the library had moved then, that it became the Hope Co-op?

843

844 MS: Oh no, it was while we were there.

845

846 LT: So that was sort of a handy location. There was a lot of foot traffic and that used to
847 be a major cultural center really for the city of Forest Grove for many years.

848

849 MS: (photo showing Mike Smith in library) This is the back of the Rogers City Library.
850 There's our pamphlet files and so forth, we are looking over the children's area and some
851 of the stacks in the children's area. There's the library director in his lair.

852

853 LT: You used to have a sign I remember, first thing when I first met you and we came in
854 to set up outreach service in Washington County and you had a sign that said "Library
855 Director: Please Disturb".

856

857 MS: Yes, yeah.

858

859 LT: I thought that was great.

860

861 MS: We had a little desk back there and I did the cataloging of what came in and so on.
862 There's a, you can see a crawl hole there up into the ceiling and that was the access to the
863 heating and air conditioning system that they'd have to piddle with every now and then.
864 The door to my office there was a place where we had it very badly and one day we were
865 having a children's story hour and that space, in front of the stacks you can see in the
866 picture, was just packed with kids and listening to a story being done and there was a
867 cloudburst and what would happen, the roof would fill up and there was one little exit it
868 had, and if it was blocked it, the water would rise and it would come under the flashing
869 and it would come down right in that doorway. And I was watching the children's story

870 hour and this sheet of water came down through that. Of course, the kids thought it was
871 part of the story, so they were delighted with it.

872

873 LT: So, history is repeating itself with the library flooding situation in this library.

874

875 MS: We have lots of leak problems, lots of leak problems, well right from the start. We
876 had many problems, well I think this is our third roof on this building.

877

878 LT: Well I guess a notable time was when Mt. St. Helens erupted and it broke the
879 support beams in the ceiling of this library. There were cracks in them and that was when

880 ...

881

882 MS: I don't think so.

883

884 LT: Remember when the came and put up some kind of scaffolding and had some
885 engineers come and there was some problem with the beam because of the weight of the
886 ash.

887

888 MS: Oh, I don't remember that. It could very well happen. I remember when the ash
889 came this way, it was the eve of Friday the 13th, it was, in June.

890

891 LT: I thought it was May.

892

893 MS: Well, May was the initial eruption when it went up towards Spokane, but it was the
894 next month that had the eruption where the wind was going the other direction and it
895 came over the whole place. I got a call from the police department that evening, told me
896 that I better come and shut off the air conditioning system so it didn't pull in any ash
897 through the filters and so forth, so I came up to the library, drove up and of course the
898 library was closed and so on, and got in. I turned off the AC system and then got back in
899 my car and was driving home which really isn't very far away in the south part of town,
900 and I could see the ash coming down, like this sort of strange rain through the street
901 lights. The next day we got up and of course it was raining and there was a mess of mud
902 flowing all over the place and we were really in an uproar. We did shut the library I think
903 a day or two.

904

905 LT: (photo of new library interior) This beautiful expanse of new carpet you see just had
906 ash ground in, because one of your other approaches was to close the library as seldom as
907 possible.

908

909 MS: Yeah, as seldom as possible.

910

911 LT: So, it took a while to decide that this was really...

912

913 MS: We decided after we tried to clean around the entrances as much as we could,
914 that having the library open was a good thing to calm people down. And I still think the
915 library is an important part of the mental health of a community (laughter) and having it

916 open is a way that it helps. But, we had a time keeping up with that. But, you know that
917 carpet was expensive when we got it originally, it was \$32 a square foot, back in 1977.

918

919 LT: A square foot?

920

921 MS: A square yard, so it was pretty expensive. I mean it was a wool carpet. And it still
922 held up really well, in fact long enough for that color to go way out of fashion.

923

924 LT: (chuckles) Given all that it's been through, flood and ash, it stood well.

925

926 LT: (photo of reading area by fireplace)sense of moving into the new building

927

928 MS: There was a lot of space. That area there around the fireplace is now surrounded by
929 stacks where the periodicals are, the new periodicals. Um, we did have a lot of space in
930 there. That's one of the things that also allowed us to do the Jubilee celebration. We
931 had some space to grow into, and we could move the furniture around. We didn't have
932 so many stacks filling up the floor space so we could move the furniture around and we
933 could do the Jubilee.

934

935 LT: (photo from Jubilee, 75th Anniversary) Photos from the Jubilee, 75th Anniversary, in
936 1984.

937

938 MS: Um hm. In 1984, our whole idea really was to not only to celebrate the anniversary
939 of the library, the founding of the library in 1909, but also to celebrate the Forest Grove
940 way of life. And so we brought in, we had different themes on different days, but we
941 brought in a whole lot of organizations and businesses and so on from the community to
942 do demonstrations and set up booths and so on, and as I said we could move the furniture
943 around then and have a real flexible space to do that sort of thing.

944

945 LT: (photo of gymnasts doing demo)Forest Grove way of life.

946

947 MS: This is a gymnastics school who put on a demonstration there. And we had a big
948 crowd. We were really pleased that we attracted so many people for the celebration and
949 that so many businesses and institutions in town got in and put up booths. There are
950 some other pictures we have here of, Tektronics set up a booth, Hope Food Co-op came
951 in, Pacific University was very active in that celebration. We had music and a keynote
952 speech at the start by Jeanette Hamby, State Senator.

953

954 MS: (photo of notables from celebration) This is a picture of some of the notables there at
955 the beginning of the festival. Gib Patterson, who I think was mayor then, Peg Gilbert,
956 retired of the university and a tremendous library supporter. She was on the library
957 commission. Jeanette Hamby, State Senator, Library Director Mike Smith, and Connie
958 Frees, who helped a lot in organizing the events.

959

960 LT: (photo of Mike Smith) Here's one of your early pictures.

961

962 MS: Yeah, I think that was about the time the library here opened. Should mention too
963 that we changed the name of the library, it was the Rogers City Library from 1909 I
964 think, in the 20s, but when we moved, the city, in all its efforts to identify in
965 people's minds that the library was part of the city organization which was one of the
966 things that helped pass operating levies, they thought it was very important that the
967 people knew that the library was a part of the city government. So, the city council and
968 the city manager wanted to change the name of the library to the Forest Grove City
969 Library but we kept the Rogers name for the meeting room in the new library. So it is
970 still the Rogers meeting room.

971
972 LT: (photo of cartoons) In addition to your sense of humor which always was well
973 known in the community, you were also known as a cartoonist and did a lot of cartoon
974 work for the city, and this is Bookman and Supercritter from one of the early summer
975 reading programs that Forest Grove Library sponsored under your leadership.

976
977 MS: Um hmm. I think that T-shirt on Bookman was one with a red heart on it, that was,
978 we handed out T-shirts, reproduced T-shirts for the summer reading program.

979
980 LT: Was that I love libraries?

981
982 MS: I think it was something like that.

983
984 LT: I love libraries was a John Cotton Dana award-winning PR campaign that was
985 county wide, that Chris Michael devised, but you drew on for this.

986
987 MS: This is the newspaper reader which is the bronze figure between the library and the
988 police department and it was donated by Hugh McGilvra. The opening of the library
989 coincided with I think his 50th anniversary in publishing in Forest Grove. He was the
990 publisher of the News-Times. He had seen these bronze figures, I don't remember the
991 artist's name but, in New Jersey and he specialized, of course, in these very life-
992 like figures, life-size too. He liked it so much and he wanted to do something for the
993 beginning of the new library, so he donated this piece which is one of the nicest, I think,
994 of the original art works we had in the new library. The newspaper actually has images
995 of the announcement of the library getting the award, the city getting the award to build
996 the new library. It has also the announcement of the, it was about the same era, of the
997 football team winning the state championship. Is that right? Or at least the league
998 championship, and some other things that happened right in that same period of time,
999 including I think Hugh McGilvra's 50th anniversary as a publisher.

1000
1001 LT: (photo of four people) So this is a picture of you with two of the people you hired
1002 that ultimately became librarians?

1003
1004 MS: Um hmm. The picture was taken in.... The woman on the right is Judy Falzone,
1005 who had a master's degree when she came to work for us as a clerk. She went on to
1006 library school and is a professional librarian. And then next to me is, of course, Colleen
1007 Winters, who is the current director, and she came to work in the library as a clerk and

1008 went on to library school and came back and became the library director. And between
1009 them is Kyra Koester, Koaster, Koester, (chuckles) we'll forget her name now since she's
1010 just recently left the library, but she has been 15 years as the reference librarian here.
1011 Just tremendous, I think one of the best reference librarians in the county.

1012
1013 LT: And still at it at Beaverton now.

1014
1015 MS: Uh huh. Now working for the City of Beaverton.

1016
1017 LT: That covers just a few of the ways that your term impacted what has become Forest
1018 Grove City Library. I think one of the amazing contributions you've made Mike, is to let
1019 people know what the library could be in the City of Forest Grove. It's one of the points
1020 Dave Pauli made, is people just didn't know before you came what the possibilities were
1021 and now they certainly are aware and we have you to thank for that.

1022
1023 MS: Wow, thank you. I was lucky to be here at the right time I thought. I love Forest
1024 Grove, it's a great place.

1025
1026 *****