

Interview with Roland Abraham

**Interviewed by Associate Dean Ann M. Pflaum
University of Minnesota**

Interviewed on July 30, 1999

Roland Abraham - RA
Ann Pflaum - AP

AP: This is Ann Pflaum. It is July 30, 1999. I'm interviewing Roland Abraham, who is a former director of the Minnesota Extension Service. He is the author of a very excellent book called *Helping People Help Themselves: Agricultural Extension in Minnesota, 1879 to 1979*. We are very fortunate to have him here to talk about how he got to the university and about the Minnesota Extension Service.

Roland, if I could ask you, how did you get to the university?

RA: In the first place, I was given the opportunity to work as a staff member in the county extension office in my home county after I had graduated from high school. I was home on the farm for two years before that happened. Jobs were pretty difficult to find, at that time. This acquainted me with the extension service. I had been a 4-H club member so that I knew a little about it in advance.

I came to the university in 1934 as a student under the student assistance program that was in vogue, at that time. I graduated in 1938 with a bachelor's degree in animal science and agricultural education. I went out directly from the university as an assistant county agent in the Red River Valley at Warren, Minnesota, in Marshall County. After about a year there, I was moved to Big Stone County along the western side of the state and I was there for three years. Then following, I was transferred to Jackson County on the Iowa line and was there for ten years. Meanwhile, I received a grant from Harvard University for a year's study there in the management of agricultural resources, so I put in a year at Harvard and finished with a master's degree in public administration.

Upon returning, I was invited by the administrators in the Extension Service to join the State Extension Service as a district supervisor of county extension programs. This involved communications and negotiations that are done with the county extension committees. The law under which the Extension Service was established in 1907 or 1909 provided that the university would work with the county extension committees appointed by county boards and commissioners. These people were invited to contribute funds toward the funding of the personnel in the counties and providing of certain other matters such as publications and so on. Then about three years thereafter, I was named

assistant director and accepted a grant on a sabbatical to work on a doctorate at the University of Wisconsin in extension education, which I completed.

AP: Do you remember the year of your doctorate?

RA: It was 1970. Then shortly thereafter, the director retired from his position and I was appointed a short time, thereafter, as the director.

AP: I see in your book it's 1968 to 1979.

RA: Right. I was appointed director in 1968 and retired in 1979. At that time, the university was still under the age sixty-eight rule and that's what I offered my resignation under. Shortly thereafter, they dropped it so I could have stayed on a little bit longer, but I don't think that it would have been wise.

My own family, my parents, had been associated with the Extension Service in the home county of Renville County for many years, so the connection between what went on in the county, in terms of programs by the extension agent and the university, was quite well-known to me. My father was one of the farmers who cooperated with the first county agent there in the control of hog cholera and the work that the Extension Service did with the State Livestock Sanitary Board in getting farmers to vaccinate their hogs to insure that they would not have losses from cholera. That's about where, perhaps, I should leave the present discussion.

AP: All right. That is extremely helpful.

One of the themes in the book is, of course, the breadth of the university's footprint, that it is the traditional teaching and instruction but that it is also the extension work and it is the schools of agriculture and it is the experiment station. As you go around the state or you meet somebody from a different state, do you have any particular ways of making this enormous institution understandable, any little stories that you tell?

RA: First of all, I would say that Minnesota was a little unique in the fact that we had several schools of agriculture located at various experiment station installations in the state. Not many states had this kind of an arrangement. We worked closely with the faculty at the branch experiment stations because our programs were based on the research and research results that emanated from the work by the research scientists. So we stayed pretty close to them in terms of what we were teaching about agricultural production and similar topics. The schools of agriculture were strictly for students who weren't able to be away from their farm homes or did not choose to, whichever, for more than six months a year. They'd come about October and leave around Easter time.

AP: That was a remarkable arrangement, wasn't it?

RA: Yes. That arrangement was put in place in the late 1800s in answer, partly, to the allegation of the farmers' groups at that time that the university really didn't have anything relative to them, so that

was put in place first. Then for most of the state, there was an organization known as the short-term schools that were conducted around the state in various counties, maybe for a week or two, and then they'd move on to another county. In Minnesota, the board for that organization was set up largely by the legislature and affiliated with the university in terms of its guidance in the programs that they conducted. The man who was appointed to be secretary and administrator of that board was a farmer from near Marshall, Minnesota. He was the son of a minister in Vermont or New Hampshire—I've forgotten which—who was kind of an expert in dairying because his father was interested in dairying as a means of livelihood in his capacity there. This man was Samuel Gregg.

AP: May I stop you for a minute? I want to be sure I spell that correctly. What's the last name?

RA: G-r-e-g-g.

AP: Thank you.

RA: I make considerable reference to him in the book. Gregg was kind of a zealot in that he was interested in getting these teachings around the state and he felt working in the program almost like a missionary would be useful. He put together groups of specialists that had maybe a little bit different theme from year to year. One year it might be on corn production or seed selection in corn. Another time, it might be on dairy production or another on poultry production. These would be organized with the county extension agents in the counties and would be located in counties around the state. For the most part, the people on these teams traveled by rail, so the assistance of the railroad was important here. They backed these programs because, obviously, if they could improve the agriculture in an area, it meant business for them. The people who contributed were largely management people, that is those who contributed the funds. James J. Hill was one of the early contributors.

AP: I remember that, yes.

RA: The programs in the counties, ultimately, were developed with a great deal of Gregg's philosophy in them. The programs would be designed to what the people in the county had expressed an interest in or from the observations of either the research people on the campus or the specialist in a particular field had discerned as they worked around the state.

For example—if I may give one interesting example—in the late 1910s, the second decade of the century, the turkey industry was in deep trouble in the state. Most of the turkeys were raised on the same quarters as chickens. Unfortunately, the chickens carried a disease that was deathly to the turkeys but didn't affect the chickens. There was a veterinarian from Rhode Island University who discovered that there was a connection here between raising the two birds on the same location without keeping them separate. W.A. Billings was employee—he came in 1918—and he learned very quickly that the turkey industry had almost shut down in Minnesota, partly because the turkeys were being attempted to be raised together with the chickens. He fostered the idea of separate grounds on which the chickens and turkeys could be raised. This pretty well solved the problem of a disease called blackhead disease, which was very...

AP: That was what the disease was called was blackhead disease?

RA: Yes. He was a very frank speaker and didn't mince his words very much. He found that the market for turkeys had declined somewhat, so he blamed part of it on the fact that the turkeys that came onto the market largely during the holidays. The dressing was always that was something was prized. In a publication he sent to all of the turkey producers in the state that he could learn about—in fact, the publication had been picked up by other states as well—he described dressing coming out of the turkey from the oven as "dark, sticky, soggy mess that looked and behaved like a ton of bricks in your stomach." The exact quote is in my book.

AP: Okay, I'll find it.

RA: He was recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] and given a superior service award for his contributions to promoting the popularity of the confinement system and for what he had contributed in other ways as a member of the university Veterinary Department, at the time. His publication on how to make an edible turkey dressing was reprinted many, many times. I had worked at the *Bulletin* department at the university when I was going to school and I remember the many shipments that went to other states that wanted this publication. It outclassed any other publication that we had.

AP: That's a wonderful fact. I wonder if that's still true today.

RA: No, I don't think so. I think that the turkey industry, for example, nation-wide has pretty well adopted the confinement system so I don't think that that could be said now.

The other publication that came close to being as attractive was the one by Clyde Christianson. He was in the Plant Pathology Department and it was a colored publication on identifying edible mushrooms. Billings was quite a remarkable guy in that he then was requested by the State Livestock Sanitary Board to conduct classes for hog producers by which they could then be certified to use vaccine for the control of cholera in hogs. He worked around the state for a number of years conducting demonstrations and teaching farmers how to use the serum and [unclear] for the control of hog cholera.

AP: This is Clyde Christianson?

RA: No. That's Dr. Billings.

Clyde Christianson was a joint employee between Extension and the, then, Department of Veterinary Medicine. Clyde Christianson was a research man on the Plant Pathology faculty. They had gotten so many requests for something on mushrooms that they decided to print it. He wrote it and we published it.

AP: I have a question for you, which is a lay question. This book is designed not for people that know any one part of the university well but for people that want to get an introductory overview.

RA: Yes.

AP: We will, of course, refer to your book in the bibliography and in the footnotes. What would you say are the most important research breakthroughs that the experiment station and extension helped contribute?

RA: My favorite in this regard would be the development of hybrid corn by our Agronomy and Plant Genetics people. As an extension agent and as a boy on the farm, about all we saw was open pollinated varieties and they were not nearly as productive as what we now know as the hybrid corn varieties that the university developed first and marketed through the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association and so on. Important seed companies now conduct research on their own developing strains of corn that could be crossed, hybridized, and produce the hybrid corn. The thing that I think about that is that up until the early 1930s, farmers sometimes weren't as well... Their idea was that these fellows that come out here that we hire to help us on agricultural problems are basing their stuff on research done at the university and they've just got book learning. Well, it took a few years before the usefulness of this was generally accepted and the validity of the work that they were recommending.

AP: These discoveries date from the 1930s?

RA: The development of the hybrid corn probably took place, largely, in the 1920s but was not marketable until about the 1930s. One of the first steps that the university took was to get young people to get interested in better production practices. As a student in the high school agriculture class, I was aware of the fact that the agricultural high school teacher was invited to accept quantities of hybrid seed from the university and place it with young people in the counties to grow. A man in my generation there was a former regent of the university, George Roundhorst, who as a student accepted some hybrid seeds and it produced real well and it kind of put him on the way to the forming of his own seed company and they produced and merchandised hybrid seed corn during the 1940s and 1950s.

AP: What about the ERA wheat?

RA: ERA wheat would be another one. That, however, was done in a little different way. It was produced in the same department and with USDA help. It was named after Dr. E.R. Ausemus, A-u-s-e-m-u-s. Ausemus was a member of the Agronomy faculty but held an appointment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well. By then, the farmers were looking for a variety that would be more resistant to the black stem rust in wheat, which decimated the crops many times during periods through the 1920s. ERA wheat was produced partly to meet that requirement of being disease resistant and also taken into account were its milling qualities. That was introduced largely through the Minnesota Crop Improvement Associations—each county may have had one. Usually the county extension agent worked very closely with them and would identify farmers who would raise the seed

under required conditions to be sure that it was pure and then go from there. The ERA wheat was largely the production of the departments and was demonstrated at the branch experiment stations when they had their summer field days. Those were always well attended and both the members of the departments that were involved and the specialists related to those departments were usually on the programs showing what they had done and what the benefits could be.

AP: Our book concentrates 1945 to the present, what would be the important—the things we've been talking about seem to be before 1945—breakthroughs? I assume that they kept improving the hybrid corns and improving the wheat, but were there new breakthroughs in the 1945 to 1999 period?

RA: One that came through was in animal breeding. You may recall that at least till the 1950s, many times the hogs came to market too fat. Some of the members of the Animal Science Department worked on producing hogs that would have a higher percentage of muscle to fat than the variety of the meats that were then being used. These sort of came aboard in terms of state producer adoption in the late 1950s, early 1960s, or throughout the 1960s, I would say. The same thing happened there as happened in the hybrid crops: companies that were organized to produce new strains of hogs began to engage in that activity and would sell breeding stock to farmers. The farmers then, with some improvements in the production at the time, would be able to put on the market hogs that were a higher percentage of muscle to fat.

AP: Were these three discoveries, the hybrid corn, the hybrid wheat and the leaner pork, uniquely Minnesota discoveries or were they happening all over the country at about the same time?

RA: They were happening around the country at much the same time because the experiment stations at the land-grant colleges were keeping in close touch with each other, that is, the research scientists there, and many of them were working on similar kinds of things. But in each instance, usually they would, for instance with a variety of wheat, come up with a new variety that was adapted to their conditions of climate and soil and so on. In livestock, those kinds of limitations are not so important. The whole notion of crossbreeding of livestock for yield and production performance was common among the livestock departments around the country.

Now, to move a little step further, you may recall in 1983, the farm situation was not very good. We had been able to produce a great deal of food, which was in demand around the world, but more than could be sold at attractive prices. The agricultural situation in many places was rather insecure. Our farm management people on the campus developed plans and processes that farmers could use in determining to what extent they would do well by producing one or two crops or certain kinds of livestock enterprises. The farmers themselves, of course, would always make the choices as to just what they decided to do. That was always emphasized in the program. The information was provided and the processes demonstrated, but whether or not to adopt was always at the discretion of the farmer himself.

AP: Was that the program called FinPac?

RA: That's one of them. FinPac was developed and there were several others and they were developed by specialists in the Department of Ag-Economics. They had four specialists in Farm Management, at that time, who were working on this proposition.

AP: So the product, as it were, for the farmer was then a collection of software that would allow them to make strategic decisions about what to grow?

RA: Yes, software is a good explanation of it, as I understand software. They used these pretty well. Of course, they haven't figured out a way of controlling the rain and so on and that creates some of the problems we have now. I'm sure that there are various interests that do deal with some of those things. There are other aspects of farm life that they deal with, such things as drainage and fertility of soils and management of the soil, crop rotation, and so on. I'm kind of emphasizing the agricultural part of this, but much of it had a bearing on rural living conditions.

There was a time, back around the early part of the century, when there was a movement on to provide ways of helping farmers study what they were doing. The feeling was that they didn't have enough access to new knowledge or educational efforts and that led somewhat to the formation of the extension services in the land-grant colleges. It was believed that farmers could help themselves a great deal if they had access to some of this information and it could be demonstrated to them that it was useful. Some of the original background of the extension system was generated by the recognition that, at that time, the availability of colleges to farm people was not as great and other means of providing educational activities and information were not as well developed. That was emphasized somewhat through the home economics and 4-H club programs. We haven't discussed those, but they were part of the extension program and still are. In home economics, for example, in the 1920s, the management of the poultry flocks, the chicken and egg situation, was largely assigned family by family to the farm wife. She used the money she got from the sale of eggs as egg money for groceries and whatever supplies they needed to buy at the local stores.

AP: That's fascinating; that's the origin of egg money then.

RA: That's egg money.

It was also believed that since the schools in rural areas were not too well developed, at that time, and were not teaching anything in agriculture or really understanding agriculture or the matters relating to human nutrition that something ought to be done to try to interest young people in this. It was believed that they would be part of the answer. So in early 1900, several of the county superintendents of schools got the idea that if they could establish something that had a little attraction to young people, such as a club, in which they could compete in the production of corn or they could compete in the baking of bread or in the making of clothing, that they might be more attracted to this. Through that, they hoped that they could demonstrate improved methods all the way around. That did take place. The early youth clubs then were largely the product of the interest of the county superintendents of schools. E.A. Erickson was Minnesota's first 4-H club leader in the state and functioned in that capacity from about 1905 or 1906 to 1939 and has been succeeded by Leonard Harkness and others along the way. He was a school superintendent in Douglas County and

he organized some corn growing clubs, potato clubs. He also organized some baking clubs and some clothing construction clubs and so on, for farm girls.

AP: What happened during your period as director or extension, 1968 to 1979? It was right in the middle of the very active political, sort of Vietnam era and so forth. Did the 4-H clubs continue as avidly as ever or was there a sort of change in interest?

RA: First of all, their interests had changed somewhat. They had broadened. They were studying such things as how to get along with your neighbors and the girls had projects such as child care and the girls participated in the livestock as well, because they had an affinity for animals. They were more interested in what went on in society and programs were developed for them along that line. I recall that, during World War II and later, projects were developed for the collection of milkweed floss, which could be used to provide floatation for military devices, aviator jackets and so on.

AP: That raises an interesting question that I did want to ask you. I've been studying different colleges and their contributions to the war effort. The way we're describing the agriculture is, in effect, that the main mandate for agriculture was to produce as much food as possible, that that was their military contribution.

RA: Also, the conservation of food through improved utilization by families in the home.

AP: I also read that the freezer came into popular use after World War II.

RA: That was partly because there wasn't the development of electrification distribution to a majority of the farm population.

AP: Until after World War II, is that right?

RA: That's about right. It really got its start in the early 1930s and got momentum for establishing additional lines in the 1940s. For example, on my farm home, they did not have electrical power available to them until 1939. The use of freezers in the home became a matter of real feasibility with the improved distribution of electrical power and that happened in the 1940s, and by 1950, I think, it was pretty well done by then. Although, the university and our own people here in Minnesota had done some work on freezing food and storing the fruit and product at a central...

AP: The lockers. When I was growing up, you didn't have a home freezer. You went to the Maple Plain locker.

RA: That's right. That pretty well has gone out of the picture.

AP: Right. Let me ask you another question. Were there any international or unique contributions in sort of government service, like to the Department of Agriculture, that you can think of that we should be sure to mention? [Sherwood] Woody Berg, I think was a consultant to Ezra Taft Benson, is that correct?

RA: That's correct and he, as you know, was, first, department head of Ag-Economics here and, then, became dean of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics. Then, he went on to be president of South Dakota State. When he retired from there, he went to Indonesia, I think it was, as an adviser to the Indonesian government on some of the things we've been talking about, using the methods that were appropriate to their conditions there and to improve the communication and the distribution of information. Of course, that could be misused if that were in the [unclear] of the organization. In the land-grant colleges, it's always been very careful to see that what was being promoted was consistent with the research results and not anti-government in character; although, there was no requirement placed upon us, that I recall, that we must only work on things in the way that our government that is in office, at the time, would promote.

AP: Can I switch for a minute to a new topic? Do you remember any issues or problems...?

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

AP: ...that may not have been at all part of the world of the St. Paul campus?

RA: Not really. There was always a dedication to the democratic uses—that's a [unclear]—of extending assistance to farm people or to people elsewhere in the world. We've had projects right in the counties of Hennepin and Ramsey here that were focused on home improvement and similar kinds of things. There was a program that was financed, in part, by contributions from the Jewish—I've forgotten the title of the group—community that had as its base learning how to work along with others besides us. In that project, the members of the 4-H clubs that participated wrote their own essays and participated in a radio broadcast content using their essays as what they presented. It was along the lines of accepting the fact that we are different in some respects from other countries of the world and we need to accept some of those things and work with them to a mutual welfare. I would say that in the farming community, there was never any organized effort to speak for or against communists or any of those [unclear]. I don't think that they were discussed a great deal in any presentations by university people, but the people that we worked with did not have those placed as a very high priority in their search for understanding.

AP: Did you live near the St. Paul campus?

RA: Yes, I lived right north, about a mile and a half.

AP: One of the characteristics that we have found in our research is that the St. Paul campus prided itself on being different from the Minneapolis campus and more friendly, more intimate. Do you have any ways of describing that campus life as you look back on it?

RA: It was a bit more of a family institution in the sense that the various departments were dealing with things that families encountered in daily life. That, I think, produced kind of a mutual

understanding of what people were up against at any particular time. The fact that they were located as they are on a separate campus probably made it possible for the people who worked there to be sort of mutually involved socially and so on. I wouldn't say that would be true today as much, because I think the people on this campus have recognized that their contributions really run in part of the directions that affect people and that the Minneapolis campus people work in other areas. But they're also recognizing [unclear] relations between these various sources of knowledge and research findings.

AP: One of the rituals of the campus that people seem to like is the little oilcan ceremony.

RA: That was a tutorial kind of recognition of excellence of teachers. For the most part, the instructors who had become departmental members did come from rural backgrounds.

At one point—I didn't mention this earlier—the extension agents that were hired by the Extension Service were required to have had some experience in a rural situation, so some of them had to have had farm experience. That no longer is being used. In fact, many of the county extension agents, now, that are employed in the counties can be from growing up in the city or with collegiate preparation in other fields. So I think the crossover has been made as far as the programs are concerned.

AP: Now, I wanted to ask you one other question. You mentioned 1983 as being a particularly tight year for the farm crisis. If I look back over the last fifty years, say from the Second World War on, are there other periods of extreme crises that we should be sensitive to in our writing?

RA: I think the present one is certainly one that is difficult because there has been a succession of years of high production, couldn't move all of the product, and low prices, and costs that continue to go higher and higher, such as for farm machinery and for other supplies that are used in agricultural production. The influence that a single farmer would have in the market has changed.

Land O' Lakes was organized by a group of cooperative creameries in the 1917 to 1920 period and they functioned primarily in dealing with dairy products. Now, they provide supplies of various kinds to farm people and not necessarily to operators of dairy installations, so that the whole intermix of agricultural life, the life on farms, is different today.

If one were to compare this with what happens in some other countries, the level of transfer of information is much lower. They don't have the people reading as much. Publications are not as readily available to them nor do they read, probably, very much of them. Also, the matter of transportation of product is different in this country from many countries. People living in rural areas in other countries don't have the ready transportation to centers of learning and back out to wherever they live without interference with the operation of their home enterprise. I think the fact that we have a better educated population and that they read more and they have access to transportation to the instructor, so to speak, rather than to have to wait till the instructor can come out to them and the whole system of radio, TV, and the whole distribution system of information is do different here than compared to Chile or some other South American countries. Some of the Caribbean nations and

some of the African nations and some of the Asian nations don't have the facilities for dispensing information that we have here.

AP: As one thinks about the Minnesota Extension Service, are there particular characteristics that, over the last fifty years, would differentiate Minnesota from Wisconsin or Illinois or some other state's extension service?

RA: I guess I was pretty well acquainted with the graduates of these other states, of the entire fifty states for that matter, when I was working. But I didn't discern that the system that they were using—[unclear] imposition of requirement is how they did it—was different, that much, in either results or methodology.

AP: So what you're saying is there was a fairly uniform set of practices and policies across the country?

RA: Yes. That was developed within the organization itself. It wasn't decreed anyplace. It just sort of developed and the interaction among states was very important. Sometimes, the legislatures would support some things. We did that here with North Dakota. We had potato production and marketing people. We had sugar production and marketing people that were employed on funds provided by the North Dakota legislature and the Minnesota legislature. There was interaction there. Now, the same thing would be true without the specialization of funds to employ people in that kind of way. I know that our people here on the campus and our extension specialists are in constant touch with our neighbors to the west and to the east and the south, particularly. There is the fact that conferences are typical in the academic world where specialists in a particular field will be gathered together to find out what's going on elsewhere in the various fields of activity. That practice follows just as well in the extension and agricultural areas.

I was going to say, too, that one characteristic I think of the extension service, of all of those that I've been acquainted with in this country, is they are very much people-oriented. They're not so much interested in whether they are producing more per acre or doing something else, let's say, in the field of fertilizer development, but rather how valuable this is to the people for whom it is developed. So they are people-oriented individuals. I think that that is one characteristic. Those who are not people-oriented were really not very successful as extension workers.

AP: That's a good point.

I've chewed up a lot of your afternoon. This has been exceedingly helpful. Again, congratulations on your book. Our job would have been much more difficult without your very fine book.

RA: Thank you. I hope that the archives have been able to retain a lot of the materials that I used.

AP: I think they have. They have been superb; they have a lot of things. We are very fortunate.

RA: A young man, [Obinnaya Oji - "Obie"] who works over in the library, came to us from Africa. His mother was here from Nigeria working on an advanced degree in the College of Home Economics and by chance, she happened to go to the same church we did and she and my wife kind of saw things alike. Some years later, after she returned to Nigeria, we got a letter from her one day and she said that her son was coming to study architecture here at the university and wondered if we could help steer him around a little bit after he arrived. He had housing arranged at one of the halls on the campus in Minneapolis. We went out to the airport not knowing what he would like, other than he'd probably be black. He was and it wasn't difficult to spot him at all. He was a magnificent young man. His place wasn't ready for him on the Minneapolis campus, so my wife said, "I think, Obie, you'll have to come right over and stay with us till your place is ready," which he did. He kept in touch with us over the years. Now, he has graduated, of course, in architecture and he has sort of majored in the development of living areas. He's now employed in the University Library, I think in the [Interlibrary] loan program that they have where other libraries and individuals can request books and have them sent out.

AP: I have one final question for you. Did you ever meet either Malcolm Moos or [C.] Peter Magrath?

RA: Yes. Malcolm Moos and I happened to be in the university band together. He played coronet and I played the clarinet. I remember the band director, Gerald R. Prescott at the time, was a marine captain by training as well as a band musician. When we were practicing for football games, programs, and the like, every once in awhile, we'd hear Prescott sing out, "Moos get in step."

[laughter]

RA: It wasn't that he was doing it as a defiance of instruction, but it just wasn't something that came to him readily. Moos was president when I was appointed the director. I knew his sister. In fact, our first house we bought in St. Anthony Park was from the sister.

AP: How do you think he handled the times that he lived through as president?

RA: Well, you know, I'm glad I didn't have to do it. I think he probably did as well as could be done at the time, because people's minds had to be changed a little bit and you don't do that overnight and you don't do it by edict or proclamation either. I think he probably did as well as he could.

Then Magrath, I worked with in more detail. He called me—I was serving as director at the time—and he had positions to fill and he said, "I understand that you knew..." a certain individual. I said, "Yes." It happened to be Billy Hueg, because he was from New York as Magrath was. He said, "Well, what do you think? I'm inclined to have him serve as director of the experiment station." I was on the [unclear] team to visit with Moos in Michigan and I thought he was what we needed here and could extend an invitation to him, which I did. I told Magrath, "Neither Bill Hueg nor I have regretted it and we still probably would do the same again." Magrath, I found to be very easy to work with and also Malcolm Moos. I had a good regard for both of them [unclear].

I was acquainted, too, with [O.] Meredith Wilson and James Morrill. At the time I became district supervisor in the Agricultural Extension Service, there was a practice that the people in the Alumni Association, [unclear] in particular, and we worked a lot together. He felt that there [unclear] some opportunities for exposure for college presidents would be useful for political purposes at least in the counties. So we would ask our county extension agents to invite, plus organize, a dinner meeting or something of that nature, let's say, in Montevideo or Marshall or whatever and invite the county commissioners or those who were on the [unclear] committee, invite the local legislators, invite members of the press to such meetings. The Alumni Association worked through their channels to invite people to those meetings and, of course, one of the things that was one of their goals was to try to capture some of the graduates out of those communities as members of the Alumni Association. We did this for, I suppose, five or six years while Morrill was president. He was an excellent man to work with. We got a better understanding of what people wanted or felt we could provide and that the university existed for as far as the state. It was a practice that we both profited by.

AP: Why was it discontinued?

RA: I don't know. I expect maybe pressures of time on someone with the presidential responsibility and I expect that the media have been, probably, sometimes more thorough than one might expect or hoped for, a more thorough discussion of the role of the university in serving the state and they recognized in the counties in terms of a relationship with the university... In many counties, the extension agent represents the contact with the university to them. Because they know that if there's something they think ought to be looked at a bit more, they can [unclear] through the county extension agent and he'll pass it on to whoever he thinks up here on either campus can give some thought and maybe some more light to it.

AP: That's perhaps a perfect note to end on because it's such a typical one. Thank you very kindly for your editorial comments and for consenting to the interview. What I will do is send you a permission slip because I will need that for the human subjects.

RA: Sure. I'm sure that, at times, I'm kind of searching around for words because I haven't been doing very much public speaking lately. I was probably a little bit more organized when I had to make presentations. I enjoyed it and appreciate the opportunity to contribute.

AP: Thank you very much. Take care. Have a nice day.

RA: Bye.

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by: Beverly Hermes

Hermes Transcribing and Research Service
12617 Fairgreen Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124
(612) 953-0730 bhermes1@aol.com