

**Interview with Patrick Borich**

**Interviewed by Ann Pflaum**

**Interviewed on August 9, 1999**

Patrick Borich        - PB  
Ann Pflaum            - AP

AP: This is Ann Pflaum. Today is August 9, 1999. I am interviewing Patrick Borich, who is a long time university senior staff member, ending his career as director of the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Pat, let me start with the typical first question. We ask the people we interview to describe their journey to the university. Where did you do your undergraduate degree? How did you end up at the university?

PB: I did my undergraduate degree in agricultural education at the University of Minnesota. I taught high school for a year and, then, came back to get a master's degree at the University of Minnesota in plant pathology. I left that experience to be a county agent with the University of Minnesota Extension Service—although, it was called the Agricultural Extension Service, at the time—in 1958 at Carlton County, which is the county just south of Duluth in northeastern Minnesota. I served there for eight years and, then, took a middle management position with the Extension Service. From that middle management position, I took a two-year leave of absence to secure my Ph.D. at the University of Chicago—at least start on my Ph.D. It took a couple more years after I returned to write the thesis to get my degree..

AP: I do want to stop you. The University of Chicago and somebody with agricultural interests doesn't compute with me. Can you explain that? That's very interesting.

PB: I started out with agricultural interests and, of course, my early positions were focused on agriculture; but, when I had served for about ten years in the Minnesota Extension Service, I decided that one of the things I really lacked was an understanding and knowledge of adult education. At the time, the University of Chicago had one of the leading adult education curriculums in the nation. They also had a Carnegie Fellowship, which I applied for and received, which covered the tuition while attending the University of Chicago. So, I really, aside from the fact that we didn't have any income for two years—I had a wife and four children at the time—it was an experience that I looked forward to because I was born and raised in a land-grant

institution and I wanted to see what the philosophy and what the kind of curriculum developed in a private institution was. I found that to be a challenge and very interesting.

AP: What specifically did you do your dissertation on?

PB: I studied the economics of advanced degrees for extension people across the country. I did a nation-wide sample of whether, in fact, it paid financially to secure an advanced degree after being in the work force for awhile and whether it was a good investment. Of course, Chicago had some of the outstanding professors in the economics of education, so I got to get their help in doing that study.

AP: Did it pay?

PB: Yes, it did! Yes, surprisingly, it paid even in states where there was no bonus or extra dollars for an advanced degree. In fact, the rumor was, in many of these states, that what you did was lose money for a year or two to get an advanced degree and it did absolutely no good financially to you or your family to receive that. I think, if I can remember correctly, nationally, the sample showed a 20 percent return on the investment, which was still a pretty good investment.

AP: What year did you get the degree?

PB: I secured the degree in 1971.

AP: I have another question before we get too far from your early plant pathology days. Can you describe [Elvin] Stakman?

PB: [laughter] Well, he's indescribable. Interestingly enough, I've come to the conclusion that back in those days, we went a lot by the "great men theory", and that was an individuals who had a broad understanding of the world at large and a large knowledge about a particular subject and was good at communicating to the general public both his wisdom and knowledge became a great man. The university was filled with individuals who acquired that kind of reputation at least. Stakman was one of them. He could do a seminar on any subject you could bring up. It didn't have to be in plant pathology. He was an autocrat. He ran Plant Pathology with an iron fist. If you crossed E.C. Stakman, you didn't succeed. If you pleased E.C. Stakman, you did. So, the words were, "Treat him with tender gloves as a graduate student and don't give him any lip." I discovered that in a number of different fields that there were individuals who acquired that. [laughter] I think that's much more difficult now, by the way. He was a great man; he was one of the great men that the "great men theory" was built on.

AP: The other thing I've been reading about him is his breadth of appreciation of some of the more advanced forms of science.

PB: Yes.

AP: And that his discoveries were as valid as a biologist or to a medical doctor . . . that they were almost genetic, that they were micro in their implications. So, that even though he was working on wheat rust, there was this broader community of scientists that would have been interested in what he was doing. Does that square with your understanding?

PB: That's true. But, again, going back to my "great man theory", as I've run into them, one of the things they always attempted to do was to bring the field that they were studying up in the recognition across the scientific world. Dr. Bill Peterson from the Dairy Department attempted to get many of his theories accepted by the medical field. It seemed to be a challenge to them to really do science in such a way that it would be accepted broadly. Stakman certainly did that.

AP: Now, going back to 1971, did your family go with you to Chicago, so it was a question of moving back or did you commute?

PB: No. We moved down lock, stock, and barrel. At the time, we were living in Carlton County in northeastern Minnesota and I was being officed as a regional district director at Duluth. We sold our place in Carlton and moved to Chicago and, then, two years later moved back to the Twin Cities area. At that time, then, we became part of the central office. I still had a district director title, but I was working on a number of different things for the director at that time, Roland [unclear]. From that position, I became state leader of Extension Research and Education and, then, moved from that position to assistant director and when Norm Brown came as director in 1980, to be exact, I became associate director with him. Then, when he left in 1984, I was acting director for six months and, then, became director.

AP: Was it still in the calendar year 1984 that your appointment took effect?

PB: Yes.

AP: You stayed in that position for . . . ?

PB: Until January 1995, so it was ten and a half years.

AP: Do you want to comment on the challenges that faced Extension during the ten years you were director? One of the things that as we're trying to tell the story of the university is we're trying to get the story line correct. How would you characterize the issues that faced Extension all the way through the 1950s? Was there sort of a steady trajectory of certain key issues that maintained themselves over the last fifty years or was it a series of completely different issues that impinged upon Extension over the fifty years?

PB: I think a major issue facing Extension in the 1950s, and the 1960s, when I came into Extension, was trying to develop a way of securing the resources of the University of Minnesota to focus specifically on some of the problems that were facing the people of Minnesota across the state. That's still an issue and that's a general issue. But, at the time, in the early 1950s and

1960s, what we had, primarily, was a field staff of people located across the state funded by both state and federal funds through the director of Extension and local funds through the county board of commissioners. We didn't have as many individuals identified as we needed on the campus who could respond to the needs as they were identified across the state. At the time, we had our specialist staff, in fact, isolated. When I came into Extension, the specialists were all located together in a little collective on the first floor of Coffey Hall and they were the people who, no matter what the problem was, responded to those issues. Their hands were tied. In many cases, they were ostracized from the departments that they represented because they didn't fit into the mold of a faculty member. It was at that time, then, that the movement began that we would place Extension dollars on specialists located in departments who would then have a responsibility to focus on these Extension issues. So during the 1950s and 1960s, was the proliferation of state staff and it was in the 1960s that we then located them all in departments rather than keeping them isolated—with one exception and that was the 4-H Club program. The state staff for the 4-H Club program did not get placed into a department until the early 1990s. As a field staff member during that time, I can remember trying to secure the right kind of resources for the issues and problems that people were facing and it was not an easy task—not that it ever got easy.

AP: Can you speak to me for a minute, in a slight detour, about the experiment station and its role. It also had campus-based faculty directing research that flowed out from the departments. Was that a separate group of folks than either the specialists that you appointed in the 1960s or the field staff who were out in the counties? How did that all work?

PB: It was actually a dual track. It started with Extension specialists who did no research and faculty members in departments and in the experiment stations who only did research. But, it became clear that that was really not the smartest way to organize, so the university, then, moved more and more toward joint appointments. So, I think right now, all of our Extension specialists have a part-time research appointment working the experiment station as well. That worked better because they could tie into the research faculty and, at the same time, bring the problems of the state to the departments much better than when they were isolated. Even though they were brothers and sisters—I guess you could call them siblings, the experiment station and the Extension Service—they were developed on two very separate tracks for a long time. It's only been the last twenty or thirty years that they have worked together as closely as you would suspect they should have worked together all the time.

AP: Were there other issues—I'm going back to Extension—that as you look over the fifty years either accelerated or changed?

PB: There were a number of issues I could speak to. One issue, certainly, was the proliferation of professionals in agriculture, not attached to the university. As they proliferated, there came more and more questions from the local government as to why they're funding an agricultural program when private companies had all kinds of agricultural education—at least they professed it to be agricultural education going on. That was an issue that we had to face.

AP: Can you give me an example of the kind of appointment that would have raised that issue? Would it have been a Cargill, somebody employed by a grain company, a seed company, a dairy co-op?

PB: All of the above. They all put in field staff and they all claimed, especially many of the fertilizer companies, to be knowledgeable about growing the crops and many of them were trained at the university with advanced degrees. They just simply said, "We know better than the local county agent and the university does because we're here with you and we hear your problems." In many cases, they became enemies, if you will, of the Extension Service. The agricultural workers in Extension, then had to look at what they were doing and whether, in fact, they shouldn't turn over some of the programs that they had to these private companies and focus more on the major issues affecting agriculture in the area and that's how we made the adjustment, which I think, in many cases, solved a problem because the local agricultural agent now was not soil testing and not recommending what kind of corn to grow, but was focusing more of his or her time on the local environment, some agricultural policy, the economics of agriculture, the land use, water conservation, a number of other issues that many of these private companies simply couldn't handle and didn't want to anyway.

AP: This trend that we're talking about . . . what was its timing? Are we talking the 1950s and 1960s or 1950s to 1970s?

PB: I think the trend and the change in our agricultural program really came in the 1980s and 1990s. There was a time in the 1970s, I would say when . . . I'll give you a personal experience. As the new director in the spring of 1985, I testified before the House Ag Committee on what Extension was doing. I was chewed up and spit out by two-thirds of the Ag Committee saying, "We really don't need county extension agents anymore. They're irrelevant. We get our agricultural information from other sources," ad infinitum. When I got done with that, I said, "Wow! we've got problems!" The problems were not easy to even have our staff understand. Our staff were enjoying what they were doing and thought they were being successful.

When I left as director and went to the same House Ag Committee, the responses I got from them were testimonies about the important work their ag agents were doing with regard to the environment, with regard to major issues. I thought that was quite a change that occurred. Not only were these people understanding that there was a need for Extension but also understanding that that need was much broader than taking a soil sample or doing some of the stuff we used to do—that I used to do as a county agent in the 1950s.

AP: That is very interesting.

Another trend, of course, that was irreversible was the suburbanization of the state and the population loss in Greater Minnesota. That must have had an effect on Extension.

PB: Yes, it did. Surprisingly, the effect on Extension was, basically, in the programs.

One of the other issues that occurred was a change in our programs with regard to family living. At the time, in the early 1950s, the Family Living Program was primarily working with home groups. There were groups of ladies who met on a regular basis and they would be trained by the local home economists. Some of the programs were more fun than they were needed really. Over the years, that program has changed to, again, dealing with some of the major issues affecting families and affecting the rural areas, especially as they start to lose population because, all of a sudden, we had a lack of people to serve on church boards, to serve on school boards, lack of people to run for political office; so, the Family Living Program began to help with leadership programs, began to work with the College of Human Ecology on family living issues that were very much different than the previous programs. I would say the acceptance of those programs has really grown over the years. When I came into Extension, the home economist would be hired and we used to kiddingly say that it took her six months to find a husband and she would leave. Now, our home economists come in and they not only stay, but they develop some outstanding programs that are bragged about county commissioners, state legislators, and university faculty. These programs have much more depth and much more impact locally than ever before.

I would say one of the other issues that occurred during Extension's fifty years was dealing with the issue of equality for women. That didn't come easily because it was an agricultural organization and, primarily, all the agriculturists were males. We had to, in many cases, go nose-to-nose with county commissioners who, I would say, were kind of sexist as we tried to get equal pay for equal work. The changing in the Human Ecology programs had a great deal to do with the acceptance of this equality because these programs became as valuable if not more valuable in many counties than did the agricultural programs.

AP: That's interesting.

Pat, I'm looking at footnote in what I've been working on. It's the university president's report for the 1950 to 1952 biennium. It had the percentage of revenue that the Extension Service had during those years. The state revenues were 22 percent in 1952 and I have a copy of the 1997-1998 break down of a similar sort, and they went up to 39 percent. Then, the federal revenues were down about 20 percent. So, there appears to have been a shift in funding sources. Do you think I happened to get just a blip of two atypical years or would you say the pattern of a change in funding source is a pretty true one.

PB: Yes, a major change.

AP: What was the rationale for it? How did that occur? Why did it occur?

PB: The major reason, of course, was the lack of increases at the federal level. We very rarely ever got a reduction in funds from the federal government, but we simply didn't get the amount of inflationary increases that . . .

AP: That was salaries, wasn't it?

PB: Yes. Let me tell you why I think that happened because it's interesting. You'll notice that both the state and the county portions increased. The trends were for increases there and the federal portion went down, as a total percentage. Another increase, of course, was in the fees, in the sale of materials that occurred in the last few years. The major reason is in the federal government and in the U.S. Department of Agriculture where the extension is located, they would pass through funds to the states to be used for extension programs. The control of these programs was, primarily, either at the university or at the local county area. It was not at the federal level, so they would make suggestions, but they would pass through these federal funds. That process simply did not fit into the way the U.S. Department of Agriculture was run and organized. Congress became more and more concerned about throwing money down a rat hole. The only programs that increased from the federal government were those that had strings attached, that were separate from the general funds that were sent to extension. They were saying, "If you do this, you'll get these kinds of funds." So, the trend was really, "We're tired of throwing money out there and not being able to control it any." Of course, the states and the land-grant institutions and the county boards of commissioners said, "We think it's appropriate that you do that." So, there was always that kind of tension. But, the federal government had the last say. I've heard the Secretary Agriculture say it, "The day I get control of the Extension Service, we'll see that they get more funds."

AP: That's interesting. And that never happened?

PB: That never happened, no. So, it's still a major issue. It's amazing that it's lasted as long as it has. The only reason it has is that it is our political strength in Congress. The senators and the representatives go back and they give the word that we need extension, so they will continue to maintain it, but nobody is fighting to see it increased in the Department of Agricultural.

AP: How would you compare or describe the Minnesota Extension Service compared to others in the country?

PB: I had a running battle with Pat Boyle from the University of Wisconsin. When I would speak in his state, I would say I was pleased to be in the state that had the second best extension service. He would do the same when he came to Minnesota. I think extension in Minnesota and Wisconsin probably has the most breadth and probably are two of the best extension services in the nation. I've had other directors say that their goal was to try get their extension service to operate like Minnesota's. Now, I know I'm prejudiced; but, I think our program is broader. I think the acceptance locally of our changing our stance in dealing with issues, I think our handling of the development of broader use of Family Living Programs, I think our focus on developing a rapport with county boards of commissioners and state legislators were all things that some states have done in pieces but couldn't put [unclear].

AP: Pat, can I ask you a question about legislative friends of the university? We will probably try in the book or in talks to describe this very interesting and complicated relationship that we, as a public university, have with our legislators, the heads of committees, and so forth. Are there

people as you look back that you say, "These people stood by the university true blue?" On this kind of honor roll of friends of the university, I would want to see X and Y and Z mentioned.

PB: Yes, there were a number of people who stood by the university. Just in my experience, there were people like Lyndon Carlson and Roger Moe and LeRoy Stumpf, who are currently in the legislature. They were really good supporters of the university in general and of Minnesota Extension Service specifically. We were a line item in the university budget so, sometimes, we even dealt with people that were different than those that dealt with the overall university budget. The people I mentioned there didn't deal just with our budget. I think a lot of legislators don't rate supporting the university as necessary for their reelection and, sometimes, university administrators played right into the hand in their discussions with them.

The greatest thing I learned was right after becoming director of Extension. My boss, Dick Sauer at the time, and I decided to get in a car and drive to each of the legislative districts and meet with the local senator and two representatives from that district and meet, then, with three or four local other leaders that our local staff had pulled together. We'd have a breakfast or a lunch. There are a lot of districts in the state of Minnesota and we spent an entire summer doing that.

AP: Do you remember what year it was?

PB: It was 1985.

AP: That must have been a very interesting experience.

PB: It was a wonderful experience. It was a great learning experience about how legislators thought about the university and how they thought about the experiment station. By the way, none of them knew the difference between the experiment station and extension service. [laughter] That's when we decide we can't talk about two separate items. They don't know the difference. They think it's all one. It's our jargon that's confusing; it's not them. We learned a lot about the needs of the state. If you remember when Dick Sauer was appointed acting president, he went to the legislature and got a standing ovation. I think that occurred because these legislators knew him from our sojourns around the state.

AP: As you took away from this summer of interaction, what confirmed what you were already thinking and did anything sort of unsettle you or create a new perception?

PB: It reinforced that the university had public relations problems across the state.

AP: What were they?

PB: We were looked on as an elitist university, that didn't really give a rip about the people of the state. It was an assumption that we cared more about building buildings and hiring more expensive faculty and that we were self-serving. It wasn't just the Extension Service and experiment station; it was the total university that got that broad brush. In fact, the Extension



Service probably got less on that broad brush being represented locally. I also could see that it reinforced the fact that we had to start to listen better as a university. We had to start to come out from our ivory towers and interact, which is one of the things that I did that I prided myself on. When a county board of commissioners said they wanted to meet with me, I met with them. Some of those meetings were hot and heavy and covered by a lot of press and not the kinds of stuff you'd like to have covered, but the fact that I came out and did that, I think brought the Extension Service concerns for dealing fairly with local government and local people . . . it reinforced that. That, I think, did a lot for the kind of support that we got. I think that was one of the reasons that President [Nils] Hasselmo made the kind of trips he did on a monthly basis, because he could see that that was necessary to change the opinions that were held about the university. I think, right now, that public relations or the opinion of the university, it quite a bit different than it was back in the early 1980s.

AP: I'm going to jump back in time to the campus when you were a student, the culture of the St. Paul campus when you were a graduate student under Stakman. Approximately what year would that have been?

PB: It was 1956 through 1958.

AP: We are trying to do a profile, sort of word portraits, of the St. Paul campus in those years. Can you think back about what it was like? Were you married? Were you single? Were you living in a dorm? Where was your office? Can you take me through sort of a typical day in those years, where you would have gone, what it might have been like?

PB: You're looking at when I was a graduate student?

AP: Right, 1956-1958.

PB: I was on the St. Paul campus from 1952 to 1955, too, as an undergraduate.

AP: Let's do 1952 to 1955. Let's do a day as an undergraduate and, then, we'll do the graduate student. Where did you live as an undergraduate?

PB: As an undergraduate, my sister and brother-in-law owned a store, a small local grocery store in St. Paul, and I roomed behind the store and did some work in the store part-time. So, I had a private room there.

AP: Your department was . . . ?

PB: Ag Education.

AP: Where was that located?

PB: That was located, at that time, in the old Horticulture building.

AP: Do you remember any of your faculty members?

PB: Sure. Milo Peterson was the head of the department. Harry Kitts was my adviser. Gordon Swanson was a faculty member.

AP: We're doing this on tape so I need to spell them. Milo Peterson, is s-o-n?

PB: Yes. Kitts is K-i-t-t-s and Gordon Swanson, s-o-n.

AP: The theory of ag education is that one would have become a teacher of agriculture in a high school. Is that correct?

PB: Yes, which I did for one year.

Let me talk a little bit about the culture on campus.

AP: Yes, please do.

PB: The St. Paul campus had a lot of returning vets, still had. Of course, the Korean War was on so we had a lot of older people who participated in our classes. It was kind of a stimulating experience. It was definitely different than a lot of people [unclear]. A lot of the discussions and a lot of the culture was invigorating. It was a fun place to participate in classes and some of the activities outside of class.

AP: There was Ag Royal Day?

PB: Yes.

AP: There was Forester's Day?

PB: Yes.

AP: I'm having trouble locating the time of year of these two events. Do you recall?

PB: I think the Ag Royal was in the spring.

AP: That's my impression, that it was kind of a spring prom.

PB: Yes.

AP: There was a queen, of course.

PB: Yes.

AP: Then, Forester's Day is the one I'm least sure of. Dick Skok will probably remember.

PB: I think it was in the fall, but I can't remember exactly.

AP: The word is that you knew everybody at least by face on the St. Paul campus.

PB: Yes.

AP: That you would greet people.

PB: We took classes, of course, on the Minneapolis campus and it was quite a bit different than participating in the classes over there where you had large numbers. In fact, to show you, my future wife and I were participating in the same zoology lab and we never met till years later and we discovered we were a few tables apart. If it had been on the St. Paul campus, I'd have met her.

[laughter]

AP: Did you join one of the professional fraternities? Was there one for ag ed?

PB: There was an ag education—it wasn't a fraternity though—organization. It didn't have a fraternity.

AP: Some of the professional ones called themselves fraternities. Oddly enough, the terminology in universities for what I call the fun and games fraternities and sororities is *academic* fraternities and the others are called professional. The year books show pictures of people and . . . Do you remember being in any particular student activity?

PB: We had an ag ed club and I participated in all the intramural activities that we had.

AP: Do you remember what sports you participated in?

PB: Basketball, baseball, tennis.

I was a member of alpha zeta, which was the university agricultural honorary fraternity.

AP: Those were the ones I was asking about . . . honorary fraternity, right.

PB: I worked full time on campus in plant pathology, by the way. I got that job immediately after getting to campus. I worked in the green house for the entire time I attended undergraduate school.

AP: What hours would you work, four to six, three to five?

PB: Different hours, Saturdays. What was nice about the greenhouse, is you could go there and work for two hours and, then, go back to class.

AP: So, it worked well around the classes?

PB: You speak of Stakman . . . I was employed by the Federal Rust Lab on the Federal Rust Project, so I had a chance to see Stakman come with his graduate students and read rust pustules in the greenhouses. It was my job to get things ready for Dr. Stakman and his troop.

AP: That's interesting. He would come through with the graduate students and read rust pustules. What's kind of intriguing is that that's very much a counterpart to what Owen Wangensteen would do in grand rounds.

PB: Yes, yes, yes.

AP: There are very interesting parallels between Wangensteen and Stakman. Both of them got all of their degrees at Minnesota. Both of them made substantial contributions in their field and both had the same broad approach to the basic sciences. They're a very interesting pair and parallel.

What is a rust pustule? Is it a growth of rust?

PB: Rust grows on a leaf and E.C. Stakman was the one who developed the scale by which you could measure the amount of infection made by the rust pustule by the size of the rust . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

PB: . . . how much it impacted and how much it didn't.

AP: He was concerned, if I understand correctly, not only with the measurement of the progress of the rust but the breeding or creating of rust resistant varieties. What was the key to doing that?

PB: The key was getting the right genetic material. There's a lot of similarity between the rust breeding that was done and some of the problems we're having currently with the lack of impact of antibiotics, in some cases, where the diseases are developing resistant strains. At the time, he would develop a wheat variety that was resistant to the rust that was covering the country and, a few years later, lo and behold, you'd find a new variety of rust that would attack the wheat that you had developed. So, what the rust was doing was manufacturing new varieties on a regular basis. When they matched a susceptible wheat, then you'd have another epidemic. That was part of what the lab did was try to be forewarned about the possibility of some of these rust

epidemics and that's where Stakman came in. He was the leader, nationally, of this rust study.

AP: I'm assuming that by the time you were there, [Norman] Borlaug was in Mexico?

PB: Oh, yes.

AP: So, you probably would not have interacted with him.

In the 1960s, of course, the Minneapolis campus and lots of other campuses got tremendously exercised about the war, about the need for new departments: Women's Studies, African-American Studies, American-Indian Studies. What kind of play did some of these sentiments have or not have on the St. Paul campus?

PB: I couldn't tell you because I was gone the entire 1960s. I would come back for any conference; but, I never got into getting a feel for what was going on on the campus. I was too busy trying to figure out what was going on in Carlton County.

AP: I can imagine; I would think that would have been one of the most important appointments . . . Carlton County.

PB: Well . . . Yes, it was. [laughter] I always thought it was. But, it was a good training ground for a lot of other things because it wasn't a purely agricultural county. It was a county with industry and with suburbs and with rural farms all trying to interact in a county. It was kind of a precursor of what was going on state-wide. So, you had to learn to deal with chambers of commerce, big industry, and farm organizations at the same time. It was a little more complex than many of the counties in the state.

AP: Pat, are there things that I have not asked you about that would be useful to get recorded from this historical record point of view?

PB: I was reading your draft of some of things of the university history. Somewhere, we've got to have a chapter on outreach, because I think that has made some advances both on campus and across the state with its relationship to other educational institutions. I think the University of Minnesota is looked at as a leader in outreach totally, not only because of the Minnesota Extension Service but also because of what is, now, University College and some of the other types of outreach that have been developed besides those two major organizations.

One of the things I saw happening, and maybe it isn't anymore, is it seemed to me there was an utter acceptance of outreach by campus deans and faculty. This was particularly true, I think, during the period of short state dollars and cutbacks we had to make and so forth. I think more and more faculty saw outreach as a way of getting the story across of the need for the university. Now, when there's a surplus, that might not be as important anymore. But, back when things were tight, a lot of people were interested in how they could tie into Extension programs.

AP: One of the things that would be helpful to us as we're telling the story is some source or record that would help us have in the forefront of our mind which were the years of the greatest agricultural crises so that we could be sure when we're talking about those decades that we give you credit. I'm thinking of FIN-PAC and various things. I find there isn't a very clear record anywhere of exactly when these things happened. How many times were there severe farm crises and which were the worst?

PB: I think your best source for that kind of information would be the Ag and Economics Department. I'm trying to think of somebody there who . . . a lot of the people I worked with there have retired. I can't, off the top of my head, think of a source. I think if you called the department head and asked, there would be a faculty member who could tell you that.

AP: Exactly. As you look back on your career, is there kind of like a 1929 year of the farm world that we should be sure to know about?

PB: One of my favorite stories is . . . I was appointed at an October annual conference in 1984. Dick Sauer got up and announced that I was going to be the permanent dean and director. This was the first part of the conference. Later that evening, I was walking down the hall when a couple of the Extension agents came up to me and said, "We'd like you to come to our room." I thought, this is nice, they're going to celebrate my appointment. So, I walked in the room and there must have been thirty agricultural agents there. They said, "We'd like you to sit down. We've got to tell you something." They proceeded to tell me that the crisis in the rural areas was getting worse and worse and they were worried that most of their good friends on farms were going to lose their farms because of what was happening.

AP: Was this farm crisis driven by low prices or drought driven? What were the drivers of that?

PB: The drivers were low prices and inflation was high and people were not being able to make their payments on their . . .

AP: Wasn't it true that, in the previous five years, the bankers had encouraged them to take on debt?

PB: Yes, yes. You want \$100,000, here, we'll give you \$150,000. That's even better. So, now, they were calling in these loans. People were killing bankers. It was not a fun place to be. I sat in that room and these were experienced Extension workers and there were tears running down their eyes. They said, "We've always been willing to help these people and, now, we don't know what to do."

AP: What did you do?

PB: We had that annual conference; that was on Monday night and it ended on Thursday. I got up on Thursday morning—my administrative staff and I had met the previous two days—and I said, "You all have a plan of work for this year. I would like you to throw it away. We are

going to embark on a major response to this crisis"—we called it, ultimately, Project Support—"and we're going to train all of you and we're going to materials and information and it's going to be ready to go by January 1st." And we did it. We turned the whole organization around [unclear] in three months.

I can still remember going into a meeting in January or February that Roger Moe had with all the university presidents and President [Kenneth] Keller brought me along because it was on the farm crisis: what are we going to do? As we went around the room, all of the other presidents talked glibly about how supportive they were going to be and, then, when it came to the university, Keller just said, "Why don't we let Dr. Borich talk about the kind of program that's going." So, we talked about Project Support. Afterwards, Roger got me aside and said, "How much money do you need?" [laughter] Of course, being dumb and new at the game, I undershot the amount by a lot of dollars and could have had a lot of money if I'd known then what I know now.

AP: What were the major elements of Project Support?

PB: It was total farm and family counseling. FIN-PAC was a major part of it.

AP: That was a computer-based economic modeling? Am I remembering correctly?

PB: It was a farm analysis of the economic prediction as to what had to be done in order to survive and where the weaknesses were and where the strengths were. Our local staff could sit down with a farm family and with FIN-PAC and in a couple, three hours, they could come out with a plan that would, hopefully, secure their survival. We also had stress education. We had education for schools and youth with regard to the crisis that was occurring. We had leadership training on how to deal with farm families that are in crisis. We moved out with a strong program and everybody was involved. There were some specialists who felt a little bent out of shape because they focused on proper animal production. That wasn't as important right then as some of the other things. Some of our better farmers were the ones that were suffering.

I should add one other thing. The legislature, during its deliberations, decided that they needed to provide some kind of mediation for farmers who were struggling trying to negotiate with their lenders and so they were going to fund a farm mediation program. I was called one day, near the end of the session, by the governor. He was going to have a press conference and he wanted me there.

AP: Which governor is this?

PB: [Rudy] Perpich. I attended. I thought, he's going to talk about Project Support. He just said, "We are signing the farmer/lender mediation and the University of Minnesota Extension Service is going to run it." [laughter]

AP: And you had no idea?

PB: I had no idea— We had to draw up the rules and everything within a month. This was May and we had to have it running by July 1st.

AP: Is this May of 1985?

PB: Yes, 1985. That was a major responsibility. But, I would tell you that Governor Perpich never forgot the job we did with farmer/lender mediation. It seemed like he didn't understand what we did in Extension aside from that. [chuckles] But, every time I was in the audience and he was speaking, he would make another positive comment about the way the Extension Service had run farmer/lender mediation and helped the state of Minnesota through the farm crisis.

AP: Pat, there's a farm crisis now. Is it similarly caused, completely different?

PB: It's not the inflation. This is strictly caused by low farm prices. The Extension Service, I think, is responding in almost a similar manner to what we did in 1984 and 1985.

AP: Are the farmers safer in that they didn't get so leveraged this time?

PB: I don't know if they're safer or not. Having 1,000 acres of property that you lose \$100 an acre on is not a good way to run a business. That's, I think, the case in many cases across the state right now. There are some people on a real short string.

AP: Is there any solution in sight?

PB: I don't know of any.

AP: It's a tough thing, isn't it?

Pat, I'm glad you mentioned the outreach and, indeed, that's something we spotted ourselves. We can't decide whether we will put it into the book chapter by chapter or do it as a separate chapter; but, you're right that one needs to total the three strands: the two general outreach units plus the outreach that's carried out by the rest of the university because that footprint is just huge.

PB: Yes. One of the things I think we've been fortunate in in Minnesota is there's an expectation and an acceptance of the people of this state that the university ought to serve them. That's not true in every state. It's part of, I think, the Minnesota culture. If you're there and a big institution, you're supposed to help people. Maybe it's part of our Scandinavian heritage or whatever it is. But, it's not supposed to just sit there and turn out geniuses; it's supposed to be available to help me with the kind of problems that I have. I think that's why our Extension Service, whether on campus or across the state, has done a pretty good job. They don't always transfer that support into finances or what we'd like, but there is an expectation there that the university help them.



AP: Do you have any predictions? One of the issues that, as we move forward in the very contemporary planning that the University College and the University of Minnesota Extension Service, people are looking at us and saying, as you and Hal [ ] and all of us did over the years, "Are there things the two can do together?" Do you have any read on that from having been out of the oven, so to speak, of the caldron?

PB: I think there are a number of different things that we could do together that might improve the efficiency . . . media work, programs, develop conferences, some of the publication. I've never been sold on combining the two organizations because I think we have different purposes and different goals. I still think, after being out of it, that combining is a simplistic approach to two very complex organizations. But, I do think some closer and, maybe, some joint appointments, like we do at Earle Brown [Continuing Education Center] . . . I think that's worked out quite well. We could do some other things that would improve the efficiency. I watched Wisconsin with great interest because they were sure they had the right answer in combining them and when they separated them again, it pretty well said that this just didn't work. I don't think it would have worked here either.

AP: That is very helpful.

Did you know that University College is moving to the St. Paul campus?

PB: No!

AP: Gene Allen has agreed to move over to the West Bank; so, University College administration and a number of the offices are going to move into the Coffey Hall suite.

PB: Wonderful!

AP: Obviously, with this as an additional reality, it's creating some very interesting opportunities.

PB: Yes.

AP: Gail [Skinner West] will be talking with Chuck Casey. It's interesting, I should say, that everything I've been hearing sounds like your framework is the current one.

PB: Is that right?

AP: That one would not want to sort of combine lock, stock, and barrel, but that one would look for strategic and selective areas for collaboration.

PB: I tried to train that into Gail. [laughter] I hope she has remembered that.

AP: I think so.

Pat, is there anything else?

PB: No, I think that's it, Ann. You must be tired of listening to this.

AP: No, this is very, very helpful. I appreciate your time. I will send you a permission form.

PB: Okay.

AP: If you wanted to send anything back to me on the draft I sent you, that's just fine. I'm going to be, over the next week or two, sort of pulling things together, reshaping, so anything you want to send me, I would be delighted to receive.

PB: Great.

AP: Good. Thanks a lot. Take care.

PB: Bye, Ann.

AP: Bye.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by:

Hermes Transcribing and Research Service  
12617 Fairgreen Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124  
(612) 953-0730