

382 Interviewer: Linda Stiles-Taylor (LT)

383 Interviewee: Barbara Dunnette (BD)

384

385 LT: And the interviewer in Linda Stiles-Taylor. Welcome Barbara.

386

387 BD: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be back talking to you.

388

389 LT: So you go way back to the old library. And you actually started working there
390 formally in 1979 but...why did you originally come to Forest Grove?

391

392 BD: Well, let's see. My husband became employed and so as a family we were searching
393 for a community...a place to live that had a sense of community. We'd driven all around
394 the Portland Metropolitan area, and discovered that Forest Grove has it's own identity.
395 I'd been there at Pacific University as a student for a couple of years so there was a very
396 important connection there. The way I found my way to the library, when we lived in
397 Michigan when David was doing his graduate work, I went to the library there with Beth
398 who was story time age, and so she was in school when we moved here, so I needed to
399 find story time for Paul.

400

401 LT: Who's your youngest.

402

403 BD: Right, and actually he was not quite three so we fudged a little bit on that. And story
404 time was at the...Oh dear...what is that, 21st street?

405

406 LT: The old library.

407

408 BD: Yes, the old library. And the program was presented by volunteers and was
409 coordinated by volunteers and at the moment I can see the face of the woman who was
410 coordinating it but I can't think of her name.

411

412 LT: People I know...Judy Sexton, or Nancy Fordise.

413 BD: Yes, Judy Sexton. I don't think Margaret was going it then, nor was Nancy Fordise.
414 And so Paul and I came to story time and that's how I met Ann Ondero, and of course
415 Judy, and the moms signed up to do a story time so I signed up to do a story time and I
416 can't remember if it was with Ann, or what other mom it was with, but that's how we
417 started. And I remember too participating in story time, and then they had summer
418 reading going, and it was the summer just before they moved here, the summer before
419 they moved to the new facility. So we had a moving van, and the theme had something to
420 do with moving or, I can't remember the specifics, but it was packing up the books and
421 moving.

422
423 LT: Which is pretty thrilling because I know the space there was rather limited for
424 children's programs, and you still got a good crowd considering what you had to work
425 with.

426
427 BD: Actually, I thought it was, in retrospect, pretty wonderful. That's where I met you, of
428 course, at the old library, and we even did puppet shows there, imagine that. We has a rod
429 that we draped across the isle way from one corner of the book stacks to another with a
430 draping (bear?), and it seemed like we did Three Billy Goats Gruff, but Liz was involved
431 in that.

432
433 LT: Mike's wife...

434
435 BD: Mike's wife, right. And myself, and I believe Ann, and so many other faces I can't
436 remember very well, but

437
438 LT: And you were a superb puppeteer, your reputation was a big draw.

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440 BD: But then it was just the beginning, I'd never done puppets before, except with my
441 children. So that was pretty exciting, and Liz Smith, Mike's wife, well and Mike too,
442 were just naturals. They inspired me, actually, to do puppetry. And Mike, along with
443 volunteering for story time, Mike had little different tasks, I don't know if you remember
444 but, if you volunteered at the library you could do this. And one of mine was checking
445 the children's collection against the card catalog, I guess that's what it was.

446
447 LT: Was it an inventory thing? To see if things were actually cataloged, or?

448
449 BD: To see what we had, relative to what would be the ideal collection, I think that's how
450 it was. I remember going through and checking those. That was probably actually the
451 only volunteer task I did.

452
453 LT: So he was trying to do some collection development and see what was the ideal
454 verses what we had at that juncture.

455
456 BD: Yeah, I think that's what it was.

457

458 LT: And so, at that point in time, what do you remember about the community? Was it a
459 friendly place? Did you get to know people pretty quickly by volunteering at the library,
460 or, what was it like?

461

462 BD: Well, let's see. Paul was two, so it would have been the summer of 1976 that we
463 moved out to Forest Grove, and story time would have started in the fall, so school would
464 be starting, and the mothers who were coming to story time were predominantly wives of
465 professors at Pacific University. So, my husband was a professor at Portland State,
466 anyway there were connections made there. And I imagine that's the first group of people
467 I met in addition to when Beth started school, then you begin to meet people. But the
468 mothers or the wives of the professors at Pacific University had a babysitting co-op. So
469 that was a natural, you always need babysitting and a co-op works really well. That was
470 also another way to begin to meet people. In answer to your question about friendliness,
471 yes, not only did we enjoy the people we were meeting, we had a lot in common with
472 them but, because I'd been a student at Pacific, and there were still some people in town
473 that went back to my years at Pacific there were those kinds of connections too, and
474 memories that were very important, and helped us, and least helped me feel more at home
475 in this town.

476

477 LT: When you became firmly employed as a children's services librarian, in addition to
478 your puppetry, and playing music, your guitar and your beautiful singing voice, was that
479 something you did long before you ever came to the library? Or was that something that
480 was an outgrowth of being a children services librarian?

481

482 BD: That just tickles me, to hear you say that. Actually no, I didn't do it. As Ann and I
483 developed the children's services program we tended to want to incorporate, if you want
484 to call, the arts. I mean using flannel boards and using music and using puppets, picture
485 and paintings and so forth, to give a broad experience for the children related to literature,
486 related to the stories. And I, personally, was learning to play the guitar, I had my
487 mother's four string guitar, and knew the cords and found this to create a connection and
488 a kind of intimacy with the children during the time of the story time when they would
489 need to get up and stretch and move and so forth. And with the guitar of course you can
490 speed it up or slow it down, or, at least I felt, a little more flexibility. And it created a
491 little more intimacy with the children. So I wasn't coming into it as someone who had
492 played a long time or had music in my background, I kind of developed it out of need.

493

494 LT: It was a big time of change in children's services as well as all kinds of services in
495 Washington County because we were becoming part of the Washington County
496 Cooperative Library Services, and a new building, and there was a lot of county wide
497 cooperation for the first time with the children's librarians sharing resources. Do you
498 remember any early experiences with Karen, Valerie Bower...the kinds of things that
499 were changing at that juncture?

500

501 BD: Oh, yes, I'm glad you asked that question, it was really exciting. 'Cause Ann and I,
502 let's see now, went to the Karen (Pillar?) Bower workshop, we were involved in
503 developing the first story telling kits, and our was about mice, I remember the media, the

504 story time, storytelling media that we created relative to Frederick, one of the Leo Leoney
505 stories, and it had puppets, and it was just about the time too that Ann was expecting
506 Jason. It's fun to remember that, remember those days, we were all so much younger
507 then. And also, I remember I was probably the first representative of our library to go, I
508 guess it would have been WCCLS because we met with Jinny Cooper, and Carolyn
509 Wakefield at Hillsboro Library and, yes it was the beginning, it was the beginning of that
510 concept of networking, the libraries working together.

511

512 LT: Carol and Jinny were sort of the Hillsboro Public Library team, and you and Ann
513 were the Forest Grove team, and there were different people from around the county who
514 were sort of in on the ground floor and helping create all of this cooperative ventures.

515

516 BD: Actually Carol and Jinny were actually kind of, not the example but the precedent
517 for having, I don't know if I should call it job sharing, because Ann and I, we were both
518 children's librarians. I don't know, they didn't exactly call it job sharing. But because of
519 Jinny and Carol I think Mike was receptive to...

520

521 LT: Of having a team approach, to being a complementary team...

522

523 BD: And Ann and I, there wasn't a plan, there wasn't a total job description, so we kind
524 of developed it as we went along, developing story time. At first we shared it, then
525 gradually when the attendance increased we were doing it separately, alternating weeks.
526 And we began scheduling three and four months ahead. And getting back to the
527 storytelling boxes, those were a real hit, and they, that workshop was, let's see now,
528 sponsored. It was the library's and the schools. And so initially the schools also had
529 access to the storytelling boxes, and of course what we discovered was little by little the
530 material was not being returned, or getting lost and so forth. And finally the libraries had
531 to say, you know, we need these for the libraries, and I don't think, some of them had
532 already made copies of some of the materials that had been developed. But that concept
533 of sharing materials and having those story packets created a terrific resource for all of
534 us.

535

536 LT: It was a great creative outlet, because I know in those day children's publishing was
537 coming into it's own, picture books, wonderful things were available. The number of
538 commercial puppets weren't like they are today, you couldn't buy characters from every
539 children's book, where as now, today, the merchandising, there's so much. Where in
540 those day you developed your own and created your own. It seemed like it was exciting
541 to see what other children's librarians could come up with; little friendly competition.

542

543 BD: And in some cases, why reinvent the wheel, I mean the idea sharing, the energy, was
544 wonderful. And so at the same time this is happening, summer reading, the cooperation
545 for the libraries for summer reading programming developed, and that also was a positive
546 development in all libraries for kids in the county because of the funding, resources that
547 were available, the programs I think we were able to fund more and perhaps stronger
548 programs. That was pretty exiting. Summer reading was really a fun time.

549

550 LT: And so the shift from the old building to the new along with the development of all
551 the countywide resources there was a huge attendance after a while. The new Rogers
552 room was often bursting at the seams during the summer reading programs.

553

554 BD: Yeh, in fact to the point where we had too...Actually at first we had them out in the
555 main part of the library.

556

557 LT: When there was still room, before there was so much shelving.

558 BD: Yes. Right, before there was so much shelving. And then of course we had to move
559 them in here. And with the fire marshal's edict, we had to limit the number of children in
560 here so, parents used to enjoy the shows as much as the children, so we had to say
561 children first, then children of a certain age, parents have to wait...Anyway it was
562 unfortunate and kind of a difficult situation, but something we had to do, a change.

563

564 LT: Do you remember some of your favorite characters? Ann mentioned like, Curious
565 George. Are there characters from children's book that particularly stick in your mind as
566 favorites? You mentioned the Leo Leoney book.

567

568 BD: I loved the Leo Leoney books. And another, I think it's Eve Bunting and her mothers
569 day mice, I think that's one of my favorites, but I have to think a minute because there's
570 so many that, oh dear. Ann and I approached our story times by themes and so it worked
571 out really well that the themes that she gravitated towards were just hers and the ones I
572 gravitated towards were different. And so stories, um, I loved stories about mothers, and
573 stories about the sun, and stories about the rain.

574

575 LT: So those were some of the themes you would use every year for...

576

577 BD: And Thanksgiving is another one. Even then we had to make a shift there because
578 you had to be careful about the, anything about church and state, and, um, I did a puppet
579 show at thanksgiving about Little Bear's Thanksgiving, and I developed the scripts and
580 did the puppets for it. I think that...it was able to bridge that, and present something
581 about thanksgiving and friends coming together. I enjoyed that a lot too. Then we did
582 other puppet shows, we kind of developed our...I'm getting away from the books, but I
583 can't think of any right now.

584

585 LT: These are fine. I'm just thinking of some of the early topic and some of the things
586 that lived through you in children's literature and some of the things that you shared with
587 the community. So you got into a lot of things with puppetry.

588

589 BD: Three Billy Goats Gruff, and Rumpelstiltskin were popular because we had access to
590 a puppet through the county, I guess he was a lepreacon, he had this wonderful red beard
591 and a bright green elfish costume and it was wonderful to create a character that, I gave
592 him kind of a gravelly voice, and his tirades when the princess was trying to guess his
593 name, the children seemed responsive to that too. That wasn't as active, I've learned a lot
594 since then so I'd probably do it differently, but, oh, The Little Red Hen, that was another
595 one we did. But again we had access to a wonderful little red hen puppet.

596 LT: Because at first it was just storytelling packets, then they developed a whole
597 constellation of resources including puppets that you could check out and circulate
598 between libraries and it just kept building until now it just sort of taken for granted that
599 the county had this massive collection of wonderful...

600

601 BD: I don't know how big it is know...

602

603 LT: Well, compared to nothing when you started, it's pretty substantial.

604

605 BD: It was wonderful. It was a wonderful resource. And of course, I don't know if they
606 still have the Mable Jones stage Mike designed. I don't remember who he talked to but it
607 was this puppet stage that was maybe six feet across and maybe eight feet tall with two
608 stage openings. And so we tried to do at least one puppet show a year, and sometimes
609 two, but as we got busier of course that determined how many we would do. What was
610 exciting to me was that preschools would call and schedule. I loved it. Cause they would
611 come in and we would do special shows, so we might do a puppet show anywhere from
612 five to seven, maybe eight times for the groups that would come. Of course we would
613 schedule probably two or three groups at one time. And it was a special time for Ann and
614 I because it was different from the rest of our job, and we would have the Nutcracker
615 Suite playing when the children came in and have the light kind of soft to create an
616 ambiance of something special going to happen when the children came in. And we tried
617 to have a time after the time when the puppets would come out so the children could see
618 the puppets and talk to them. And of course the ages of those children, talking to the
619 puppets was an exciting thing. We weren't privy to anything really personal, but I
620 probably loved that as much as anything if not more than the puppet shows themselves.

621

622 LT: Well, certainly as an outgrowth of that Forest Grove went from having a catch-us
623 catch-can kind of, but nice, volunteer story time to one that people were coming from all
624 over the county to see the programs here because the quality was such and the reputation
625 grew for the quality of the programs that were represented here.

626

627 BD: I guess that's right.

628

629 LT: You can't say it in all honesty, but I can say it's true!

630

631 BD: But we would be surprised to have people from 'Oh, well we heard about your...' or
632 'Oh, we'd love to have you.' And mothers that would be so regular, I'd have seen, even
633 now, I've been away from the library since 1996, and there are still people, I've had
634 people say 'don't I know you? Oh, the library!' So that was very special.

635

636 LT: Over the course of the years you've probably seen children that were preschoolers
637 along with your children who graduated from high school and went off to college, grew
638 up.

639

640 BD: Yes. I mean, Ann's son and my son grew up through our working at the library and
641 of course are professional people now so, it's been a long time. Working at the library, I

642 have to tell you, was, I've viewed it as having your cake and eating it too because, there
643 was creativity, there was a really wonderful staff, the people that Mike hired, when
644 Coleen and Robin hired, it was as if the new hires has always been here. They seemed to
645 have a real sense of the chemistry of the staff. It's like you felt you could trust them to
646 hire people that would bring special things to the staff and that was mostly the case. The
647 opportunity to serve the public, I think collection development for me was really exciting
648 for me, collection development and then reference because more and more I think another
649 development in the community was homeschooling. And I remember when families came
650 in and were needing certain kinds of services and so we began to think a little bit
651 differently in our services to meet there needs. And then of course another change in the
652 community was the increasing number of Hispanic families and so through story time we
653 were trying to, I guess it was Head Start, that most of the children were Hispanic,
654 Hispanic speaking. And so we tried to address that need with them, and I remember one
655 time one of the teachers, I think it was the head start teacher came in and I was doing a
656 story time for them and I had had Spanish years ago and so it was really hard to
657 remember and trying to anticipate what I would say, and so they weren't exactly laughing
658 at me, but what she was saying was it was good for them to hear someone trying to speak
659 Spanish and making mistakes, but it was really okay. And I loved that. Because we were
660 able to communicate and I developed a puppet show using Styrofoam balls and glove
661 hand puppets, I used it in a demonstration at the Youth...let me think of the organization
662 now, Oregon...Anyway. They meet twice a year and all the teachers who have young
663 children, preschool age children meet,

664
665 LT: Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children?

666
667 BD: Thank you.

668
669 LT: No wonder you had...what is that OAEYC...hard time to get that acronym.

670
671 BD: I hadn't used that one in a long time. So, one of our patrons and I did a workshop. So
672 the point of this little puppet show was just a very simple kind of puppetry was using
673 simple Spanish and maybe focusing on colors, or focused on numbers, so the children
674 could count with the puppets, or respond to colors. And I found that to be fun with the
675 children that came because these puppets weren't specific characters, really, and they
676 could do a lot of different things. They could have tugs-of-war, or question each other or
677 chase each other, or play hide and seek. Anyway, that was a lot of fun and that came out
678 of the, again, the change in the community and the needs of these young children, which
679 also meant that we were exploring our collection development that would include books
680 in Spanish for the children so that was pretty significant among the other things that were
681 significant.

682
683 LT: Well let's share some pictures now. So here we are in 1979, Liz Smith on the left,
684 and Carol Polly in the middle, and you on the right. And what are you up to?

685

686 BD: This was a very exciting time, because it was the dedication of our Mayble Jones
687 Memorial puppet theater at the Forest Grove City Library. And we were performing
688 Three Billy Goats Gruff.

689
690 LT: Here's your daughter Beth at age 10 in 1980...

691
692 BD: That's one thing about the Forest Grove City Library staff, All of our family at one
693 point in time or another would be involved in something that was going on at the library.
694 Beth, let's see now Beth is pictured there with Champ the Beaver, and she had set a goal
695 for the summer reading program, and I do believe it was the "Go for the Gold" summer,
696 so she looks like she's reading to Champ, and maybe having finished six of her books,
697 and heading rapidly towards her goal.

698
699 LT: This is a 1981 newspaper photo of you sharing your music with children.
700

701 BD: It looks to me like it's nighttime story time, because it looks like I have my bathrobe
702 on, which is appropriate. The children also look like they have their pajamas on to me
703 too. And the article's again, featuring and promoting our summer reading program that is
704 coming up, 'cause the nighttime story time would always happen in June. It was our final
705 story time of the year, and then we would go into our summer programming.

706
707 LT: So the theme for 1981 was Castles and Dragons for summer reading...No stranger to
708 the Balley Town Parades, there's one when the library did the storytelling, story
709 characters. Who were you in this one?

710
711 BD: Well, attempting to be Mary Poppins.
712

713 LT: I'm sure the Umbrella was handy...Here's a photo of you with Ruth Hunter who was
714 then the reference librarian, and Judy Faltsom, so that must have been in the early '80's.
715

716 BD: Ruth and Judy were hired not too long after we moved to the new facility, to this
717 building. I remember when they both came on.

718
719 LT: You are there on the left.

720
721 BD: It looks like we're in the staff room, doesn't it?
722

723 LT: Having a good chat...And here are you on the left, and Kiera in the center, Ann and
724 Coleen, at a city function receiving some lustrous award that...

725
726 BD: This is the employee recognition that, I don't know if they still have it, but they used
727 to have it every year. And Kiera received what was to be the recognition of Employee of
728 the Year, where employees would nominate their peers and that someone was, of course,
729 awarded the honor. Ann and I received the same award, but I can't remember what the
730 different awards were about.

731

732 LT: Left a big impression. It was something great, you knew that.

733 BD: I've never been to Kennedy School, have you?

734

735 LT: Here's a 1994 picture of when the parent resource table opened, and Jennette Henby
736 came as part of the ceremony. There was kind of a ribbon cutting.

737

738 BD: That was pretty important because Ann and I were realizing how much we needed to
739 have a point, or a place where parents could come begin their search when they needed
740 special kinds of resources, child rearing kinds of issues, and I believe that was funded by
741 a grant from the state and that's why Janette Henby was there.

742

743 LT: Thank you so much for being with us today Barbara. You said you are on your way
744 to a special dinner this evening at Kennedy School because as a still very active
745 puppeteer in the Kids on the Block program.

746

747 BD: Right, it's the end of the year for Kid's on the Block public awareness program.

748

749 LT: Which serves schools throughout the state helping children learn about special needs
750 and...

751

752 BD: It has several different areas actually. This is Portland area, Kid's on the Block, so
753 we serve schools in the tri-county area.