

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #463

Interviewee: Jolyn Wynn

Interviewer: Matt Simek

Date: June 29, 2008

Place: Felt Recording Room, Harney County Library, Burns, Oregon

Subject: Jolyn's Tenure at the Harney County Library

MATT SIMEK: This is an interview with retiring Harney County Librarian Jolyn Wynn, on Sunday morning, June 29th, 2008. This interview is part of the Harney County Oral History program, and was recorded at the Harney County Library. The interviewer is Matt Simek of Newberg, Oregon. Good morning Jolyn, thanks for coming out on a Sunday morning for this.

JOLYN WYNN: Well it's great to be here Matt.

MATT: To your library.

JOLYN: Well, for a few more days.

MATT: For a few more days. You know, just to warm up into this, we like to go back a little bit and just get a little sense of where you came from, and how you came to Burns, and what your early history was. And then we'll move into the more subtenant issues of the development of the library over the years. So if you could just begin us, a little bit

with your early history, where you were born, where you came from, and how it was that you wound up in Burns.

JOLYN: Oh, okay then. Well I was actually born in Buffalo, Wyoming. And when I was 3 our family moved to Casper, Wyoming where I was educated, and lived until I was about 20. I have five sisters, and they have been scattered all over the country for one time or another, but they are all gravitating back home to Casper, just as I am in July of -- well actually about three weeks from now. I got my first, I got an associate degree from Casper College in 1969, in journalism. And then shortly after that I got married. And so I didn't go back to college until 1985, and I graduated from college at Eastern Montana College, which is now MSU Billings in 1988, with a bachelors degree in elementary ed., and a minor in library science.

My husband worked during those years that I went back to college at the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Lame Deer Montana, on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. And in 1988, he received word that he got a job with the Forest Service in Hines, Oregon. And so we all packed up and, our two girls Molly and Emily, George and I we moved to Hines, and got the girls enrolled in school in 1989, semester time.

And that fall, in August of 1989, I was hired by Harney County School District to be the library media specialist for Slater and Hines Schools. I worked there for five years, four of which was as the library media specialist. And then in 1990, Measure 5 happened in the State of Oregon, which is the property tax limitation, and unfortunately my library position was the first to fall, of many school positions because of that Measure 5.

I worked for one year as a 6th grade teacher at Hines School. And then I knew that education wasn't really the way I wanted to go, so I resigned. For the next five years I substitute taught. And then in 1999, I was approached by Peggy Sitz, who has been the librarian at the Harney County Library. She told me that she would be retiring and that I should think about putting in for her job. So I did that. And I was hired in July of 1999, at the beginning of that physical year.

MATT: So you've had a pretty good tenure here then.

JOLYN: I have, this will be, well it will be nine years when I retire. And it was nine very busy years.

MATT: Tell me a little bit about Peggy Sitz. Now I notice that she has an oral history of herself in the collection. And so no doubt she has gone through a great deal of the development of the library. But from your perspective, when did she join the library, and how had it evolved from when she took over to when she passed the baton to you.

JOLYN: Well maybe I should start even earlier than that. The Harney County Library was originally started by a group of concerned women in 1903. And it was the Burns Mother's Club, they called themselves, and they felt like a civilized town should have a library. And they were willing to take on the starting of the library. They came together in one lady's home, and I think they met monthly. They had to pay a yearly dues of 25 cents. (Laughter) But they each were required to bring a book to each meeting, and those books were stored in the home of one of the ladies. So eventually ---

MATT: Do you know who those ladies were?

JOLYN: We do have --- I don't know their names personally, but we do have a record in the library of them. Anyway what happened was, eventually the book collection grew

out of that ladies home. And then it turned into the Burns City Library. And there were several librarians that actually took over, most of which were volunteer librarians. But where I really know the beginnings of the history of the library as it is today, it was Peggy Sitz's mother, Genevieve Slater, who really got the library off the ground. The original library was in what used to be the Cramer Mallon Law Office, and what was at one time the Burns City Hall. And the jail was actually above the library. And I believe that Genevieve Slater also has an oral history where she goes into a lot of detail about that interesting scenario. And then actually it was Genevieve Slater that was at the head of the library when this particular building was built in 1969.

MATT: You're talking about the building at 80 "D" Street.

JOLYN: Yes, at 80 West "D" Street. And again, Genevieve goes into a good amount of detail in her oral history about that. But Peggy, her daughter, actually worked with her as an assistant librarian. And then when Genevieve retired Peggy took over.

MATT: And what year was that?

JOLYN: I'm not absolutely sure of the year, but again that is on record here. But Peggy, I believe, worked for a total of 27 years here at the library. Part of that being the assistant librarian and part of it being the library director.

MATT: So sometime around the '70's is when she took over from her mother.

JOLYN: Yes, I believe it was mid '70's, uh huh.

MATT: And then her mother had it for what, decades before that or ---

JOLYN: Well I believe her mother was the librarian over twenty years. And so actually there was a dynasty of Genevieve Slater and then her daughter Peggy Sitz for about 52 years, I believe. So I was kind of following along in great big footsteps.

MATT: From the mid twentieth century on.

JOLYN: Yes, yes.

MATT: How was the county in terms of --- or I guess it was city library at the time.

JOLYN: Yes, it was.

MATT: And any idea of the size of the library in terms of volumes were ---

JOLYN: Well currently our volumes are about 28,000. When I came, we don't have an exact count, right now every book that we have bar coded, which is much easier to count when you have bar codes, it's a little over twenty-eight thousand. But when I first came in 1999, the whole first year I was here we did a massive weeding of the library. That means basically we discarded a whole lot of books that we felt were out of date. And besides all of the shelves were quite crammed, and we had no place to put new books. So we felt that that was the number one priority. We had a massive book sale at the Catholic Church Parish Hall, and we had hundreds of people come. And it was a good way for me to be introduced to a lot of the community people that hadn't met me when I was working at the school. And I think they knew something was up.

MATT: And so it started off obviously a lot smaller than 28,000 and built over the years.

As a city library, and then a county library, how did the community support a library?

Was it enthusiastic or was it just sort of *lais-sez-faire*, or ---

JOLYN: Well I really, you know, it's kind of hard for me --- I don't know all of the particular history of --- I know bits and pieces of it. I know that when I came on they felt that maybe it was time for a lot of changes. This library was built in 1969, with the generous donation of Jim Fellows who was a business person here in town who owned a music store, and was a pianist. And was at one time a concert pianist. And he gave the

majority of the money to build this library. And then the library also received a library services and technology grant to fund the rest of it.

MATT: From where?

JOLYN: From, through the state library, the LSPA grant is through the federal government, that is funneled through the state library. And they agreed to pay the rest of what was needed to build a new library here in town. And this building was quite a radical design for 1969. There were a lot of people in town that were not enthused with the design. The architect was George McMath, who I believe was out of Portland. And he had quite an interesting outlook on what a library should look like. And it's not altogether what the people in Harney County thought it should look like. (Laughter) But he prevailed!

MATT: And it certainly is a beautiful building.

JOLYN: It is. And many, many people who have come here, just visiting, you know, they stop by and use the computer, whatever. They, a lot remark on how for a building that was built in the late '60's, how this is so up-to-date.

MATT: So the times have sort of grown into the computer, into the computer, into the library building.

JOLYN: Exactly.

MATT: It was way ahead of its time.

JOLYN: It was way ahead of its time. And one thing that is really, I think, an asset of this library is all of the light that comes in through the windows. It's very light and cheerful, and that's the way we like it.

MATT: Now the first time I came over here I was very stricken by what an advanced place this seems to be for a very rural town like Burns, and very rural Harney County.

JOLYN: Uh huh.

MATT: And I was surprised at how many people were in here. So it seemed to have a good amount of use.

JOLYN: It didn't right at the beginning. When I was hired to be the library director, I remember at my interview --- there were five or six people on the committee, and Peggy Sitz was actually one of them. They asked me some very pointed questions. One of which was, how do you feel about taking over the maintenance of this building? How do you feel about starting a Friends of the Library? How do you feel about automation of the library? Do you think a library foundation is a good idea? They went through all of these things, and I thought wow, maybe this isn't really the job for me. I had no idea that it was going to be this much work, and I would have to be put out of my comfort zone so much. And of course I answered all of their questions, and I agreed that yes, it was a good idea for all of those things. And then I went home and pretty much prayed that I wouldn't get the job. And about four o'clock that same day Jack Drinkwater, one of the county commissioners, called me and said, "Congratulations, you're the new library director." So I knew I had my work cut out for me.

And so in 1999, the then new county judge, Steve Grasty, he came on the same year that I did, but he started in January and I started in July. He met with me, and he said he had put some extra money into the reserve fund for the use of the library so we could start updating the building. One of the very first things we had to do was evaluate the lighting, because there were so many of the Florissant lights that had totally burned

out and burned up the ballast, and so they did not work at all, even with new bulbs. And we looked at that, and we agreed that that had to be one of the very first big money items that needed to be taken care of. I remember previously, when I had just been a patron of the library and come in, that we sometimes had to ask Peggy to turn on banks of lights. And when she did that, well some, most of them didn't work. So we knew that that was the number one priority. So we did accomplish that during the, I believe that was the first or early part of the second year actually that we got that done. It made a huge difference. However, when you see the light, so to speak, you see a lot of other things that need to be done. So we just kind of basically started into that long list of maintenance things that the building needed after being here for thirty years, and basically nothing being done. So ---

MATT: And that was due to what?

JOLYN: Actually that was due to the fact that Peggy --- and I have to kind of back up a ways. Claire McGill Luce had left \$30,000 to the library for, actually part of her reasoning behind that was to start an oral history program, of which we are here today. But another thing was that she had left a letter saying that she hated to see her, what she would have thought of was her library, her local library, because she was actually born in Andrews, in the southern part of Harney County. She didn't want to see this library full of just old donated books, you know, with cobwebs in the corner, and very outdated everything. She wanted an up-to-date library that the people of Harney County could be proud of, and go to as a source for information. And a certain amount of cultural entertainment. And she was very forward thinking in that way. So anyway she had left \$30,000 in her will, of which \$1,000 a year would go to the library. Well she passed

away in 1972, I think it was in 1972, and her family at that time contacted the library board, and said rather than pay out this \$30,000 we wondered if we could, in order to close the estate faster, if we could just give the library \$30,000 worth of Time stock, because she was married to Henry Luce III of Time Magazine. And so the library board agreed to that, not knowing that it really was against the law for a county to own stock. Well, unbeknownst to everyone the county judge at that time, Dale White, just kind of put that stock certificate in a drawer at the courthouse and just left it for about twenty-five years. And, you know, they would get little sheets every quarter probably outlining, you know, that the stock had gone up or down, or whatever. When Steve Grasty came on board in January of '99, he said, "You know we really need to follow the rules here. It is against the law for counties to hold stock, we need to sell this."

MATT: That was a state law?

JOLYN: It was, I believe, I don't know if it's a state or federal law. So they decided to go ahead and sell it. But in the meantime the stock had split, because Time had bought Warner, and so it was now Time-Warner. And so that \$30,000 grew to 1.9 million dollars, and that's what was made off of the stock when it was sold in January of '99. That was quite a coup. It was well worth the fact that Dale White had stuck that in a drawer, and just left it to grow. That really enabled the library, through the okay of the county commissioners, to use some of the interest from that money, which was put into a special fund under the regulation of the county for the library use.

MATT: I wonder if that had become a trust?

JOLYN: It had become, well a special account that was designated only for the library. And the reason it went under the county was at that time the library did not have a

foundation in place to accept that money. So that was the only thing they could do. But Steve agreed that it was way past due for a lot of maintenance things to be done on the library. So over the course of the first three to four years I was here, besides the lighting that was done, we replaced the front doors, we replaced a lot of broken windows, we put in a new sewer line, we had the bathrooms updated with new toilets put in, and made handicapped accessible.

We did some painting, actually the painting in the children's section just made it a whole different world. It went from really brown ugly T-111 boards to a very bright welcoming children's section, thanks to the foresight of an artist in our community, Val Knox, who said if you buy the paint, I'll paint the children's section because I can't stand it a second longer. That made all the difference. That got a lot of kids into the library, and when kids come into the library their families follow. That was just a coup for us. And it seemed like, I have to say here, it seems like when we needed something in the library, we must have put it out to the universe or something because people always came to help fill that void that we needed at that moment. Val Knox was probably the first one that showed up, that filled that need.

Then we had another instance of that was one day I was sitting in my office and the phone rang, which I believe was in my, probably the last six months of my first year, and it was a sales person from Oregon Trail Internet in Pendleton. At that time we had one computer in the --- actually two in the library that worked. No, I take it back. There were two computers in the library, one of which worked. And we had to share, the staff shared that computer with any patron that wanted to come in and use the internet. It was not an ideal situation. And we didn't have good wiring. So this fellow, the salesman that

called, he was from Oregon Trail Internet in Pendleton, and he said we want to bring our internet services to rural parts of Oregon that really don't have good internet services. He said, "What would your library think if we sent in a team of guys, rewired your library for internet usage. We would pay for a T-1 line to come in there, and in exchange for that you would house our server, and we would give you free internet for several years." And I said, "Well I don't know a whole lot about technology, but that sounds like a pretty good deal." So of course I said yes. And sure enough, about three or four months later there were a team of guys, I think four, came in. We rented one of those little machines where you can raise up, you know, since we have such tall ceilings here, and they had to crawl up into the attic.

MATT: Oh, a man lift.

JOLYN: Yes, a man lift. Yes, we actually rented one of those, and whoever rented it to us said, "You know we're going to let you use that for free." I guess they felt sorry for us. So basically it cost us nothing to rewire this library for internet. After that, we started getting computers from here, there, and everywhere. The employment office gave us a brand new one if we would put their home page on, you know, on a home page. Then we got one from the Treasure Valley Community College, they had a spare one that they gave us. And so pretty soon we had four. And more people started coming in. It was the people that couldn't afford internet at their homes, so they came in. And pretty soon, you know, the word spread. And so here, everybody could see, you know, what was going on at the library with the new lights, and they knew we had computers. And the children's section was great, so --- I don't know, it just kind of spun from that. (Laughter)

MATT: Now does the Foundation now exist?

JOLYN: Yes, actually a Foundation was formed. A committee came together in 2000, of concerned citizens that knew we really needed to have a Foundation. Because they knew about this money from the Claire McGill Luce will. And they knew that it was kind of not a good place to be under the County. Because, you know, counties have up years and down years, and they were afraid that if it got too far down that maybe they would borrow money from that fund, and they were uneasy with that. So it came together and it was officially formed towards the end of 2000. And they got their 501-C3 in place. And they said, okay from now on whenever there is a donation to the library from a will, like we got one that was for \$400, and that went into the Foundation. And several others, you know, small bequests like that.

However the county wasn't quite ready to let go of that Luce money, and so --- But it was alright, because we knew that something had to be done with this Western History Collection. Which, when I got here was stored in the back, the dark back room of the library that nobody could see. It was a collection of about 1500 to 2000 western history books that were given to the library in the wills of Walt McEwen and Edward Gray. They were, there were some of those books that were in the \$1500 to \$2000 range per book. They were all first editions. Edward Gray's was more of a working library because he was an author of western history books. So his were a little marked up, he had a lot of notes and things in them. But Walt McEwen only collected first editions of beautiful old books.

And here they were, in the back room of the library and that's probably when I need to introduce Sandra Crittenden into this mess, because she and her husband moved over from the Roseburg area about six years ago. And she came into the library one day,

and she was puttering around in the Western History section, and we got to talking, and she said, "You know, this is my passion." She said, "I absolutely love western history." And I said, "Oh, well maybe you'd like to go see our back room." And I took her back there. We didn't let very many people know, because we knew it was a very valuable collection. But she looked like a trustworthy person. So I took her back there, turned on the lights and sat down with her in there and she, her mouth just gaped open. And she said, "What are these doing back here?" She said, "This is a fantastic collection." And of course not knowing that much about western history, I'm more of a generalist. I said, "So you think this is a really good collection?" And she said, "This is outstanding." She said, "Something needs to be done with this." So over the course of the next few years I brought it up to the attention of the county commissioners, and actually what really got us started was there was a community update meeting that was held at the Senior Center one year, and I believe it was like in 2002. And I was called on to give a short speech about what was happening at the library, and I brought that up. I said, "You know, we have some wonderful western history books that were donated to the library in 1996, and they are stuck in a back room, and we feel that they really need to be made accessible to the public." And of course, you know, the county commissioners knew about this, but they have a lot on their plate and it kind of got pushed way back. Well the people that were at that meeting, they wouldn't, they kept bringing it up to the county commissioners after that. And so finally Steve Grasty and the other county commissioners --- I had gone to a county court meeting to report on some things that were happening at the library. And one of them said, "Well have you started on that project yet?" And I said, "What project is that?" And they said, "Well how about getting going on that western history room?"

And I said, “Oh, okay.” Shortly after that Steve brought over the county grant writers who were in town working on another project. Introduced me to a couple of them and said, “Okay, they’re going to be grant writers for this project. We want to add a western history room on to the library.”

Well unbeknowst to me, who had never done this before, you have to get community support before you can go out for grants. Which means that you had to do, well I had to do a lot of fund raising, a lot of raising awareness in the community about what we wanted to do. So since the Foundation was kind of a group that met, you know, sporadically about every other month, and were people that really weren’t that interested in doing the fund raising part. They were there, so a Foundation could be in place. But they really didn’t want to do fundraising. It pretty much fell on me to handle all of the first big fund raising event. That happened in 2002, I started planning in 2002 for that. And it was, we decided to have a, just a real basic hamburger type dinner at the Elks, and to offer author baskets for auction. And I contacted somewhere in the realm of sixty people in the community to sponsor an author basket. And then my daughter who lives in Wyoming said, “Okay Mom, I’ll help you.” She said, “I will contact authors and ask them to either send a book that’s autographed, or an autographed plate that we can put in a book of theirs. And then whoever sponsors a basket will just make, you know, that book the focal point. And so we did that. And we made over \$5,000 that first year. We had a Friend of the Library and her husband sit at a table at the doorway and have everybody that came sign-in, and we attached that list of people that came to our event, which was about 250 people, to our first grants to say, okay, here is our community support. It was quite an awakening for me about how libraries have to constantly raise

awareness in the community about what their library is doing. And do almost constant fund raising of one kind or another because the counties can no longer really support the library the way it needs to be supported. They have limited funds, and it's getting to the point, I believe, that libraries are going to have to become self-sustaining in one way or another. So that was the first of five fund raisers that I pretty much coordinated.

MATT: Did fund raising come easy to you?

JOLYN: No. Does fund raising come easy to anybody? It definitely didn't. I went way out of my comfort zone on this. Because I had to basically call on a whole lot of people to help. And it kind of --- I really don't like to do that. It's not something that comes easily to me. But I learned how to do it. And I would go downtown to various business, like the Book Parlor for instance. The lady that runs the Book Parlor is a good friend of mine, and I said, "Janice, would you be willing to sponsor a basket, you know?" And one year it was the state basket, and one year it was a country basket. Two different years it was author baskets. And then one year we did nothing but art, Harney County art. And so some of the same people sponsored a basket every year. Some only did it one year. We had businesses that sponsored. One year, the first year we did it, the Vet Clinic sponsored a John Erickson basket. And John Erickson writes all of the cow dog, "Hank The Cow Dog" books. And so John Erickson sent us book plates. And so they were all excited. Every vet that worked at the clinic sponsored a basket. And they put stuffed dogs in there. We put John Erickson books, and they put dog food, and the whole smear. It was so much fun. And it brought a whole lot of publicity to the library, and what we were trying to do, that we hadn't ever done before.

And let me tell you, my associate degree in journalism has really paid off in this job, because I have written so many press releases about, you know, what was going on in the library. We had to raise the awareness of the community of what the library was trying to do. The mission we were trying to accomplish. The people we were trying to reach. I mean every single time we got something in the paper was to our benefit. And more and more people started coming in, and getting library cards, and bringing their kids and saying, “Oh, can I use the computer?” And pretty soon they realized that this was a good place to come. That’s probably, I would say, one of my biggest accomplishments being here at the library was making this a really welcoming place, where you not only gather information but you see people you know. It’s kind of like, you know, being comfortable in your own living room. And that’s the way I feel, I feel good about that.

MATT: Do you, do you see that --- let me re-phrase that. Do you think the same thing would have happened had it not been for the computer?

JOLYN: Oh yes, I think so. The thing with this library when I first came, and one of the questions on my, during my interview was how do you feel about technology, and bringing this library up to the twenty-first century. Well, you know, I’m in that generation that is kind of half there and half not. I mean I was, I grew up, you know, learning how to type, and on a manual machine at that. Whereas it has been a big job, you know, just like you I’m sure, it’s been a jump, and it’s been something that I have had to make myself do. Well I knew that technology was the way of the future in the library. And when I first came here, of course, we had the old card catalog, you know, with all the little index cards. And that was one thing that was brought up, we need to automate this library. And I had no idea how to do that. I have to be totally straight with

you, I didn't know what I was doing, I didn't know which automation system was the best. The thing that helped me there was I was invited to come to a meeting of the Libraries of Eastern Oregon, which was a new organization that was formed, I believe, in early 2000, with an Ellis T. A. grant from the State Library in hopes that they could look into taking large parts of Oregon and making them into library districts so that they could be assured of funding to keep their libraries going into the future. Well as it worked out, that was not a doable thing in the vast expanse of Eastern Oregon. It was more doable in Western Oregon.

In Eastern Oregon there is more of an individualistic kind of attitude, like this is our county, we want to do it our way. And so they realized that quickly. But they decided to stay in business, so to speak, because they felt there was a real need for librarians in more remote, more remote Eastern Oregon libraries, to have a support system in place that we could go to these monthly meetings, meet up with other librarians, get ideas on how, what they were doing in their library that we could kind of beg, borrow, and steal. And it was at one of those meetings that I found out that there was a, Eastern Oregon University was putting together this automation grant. And it was over a million dollar grant, and what they wanted to do was, they would be the systems network place where they would get this really high end automation set up there and they would bring in rural libraries into their system and we could become a consortium of libraries. It was only because I went to that meeting, that initial meeting, that I found out this was possible. So I approached Steve, and I said, "Here is the thing. We can get automated under this grant if the county is willing to pledge a certain amount of money for us to pay for some of the initial cost." And he said, "Let's do it." He said, "We have

that, some of that interest money and we can do this.” By doing that we became part of a much bigger whole. We no longer just have 28,000 items in our library, we have a million and a half items in our library. We are part of a consortium of I believe sixty-six libraries. And we have the ability to get a library loan from any of those libraries, we can get materials in three days, up to a week. And our patrons now, if they have internet access at home, they know that if we don’t have a book in our library they can place the book on hold in Milton-Freewater, or Pendleton, or Ontario. It’s such a wonderful thing for rural Oregon to have that capability, especially when, you know, we’re facing globalization.

Well, we couldn’t be just little Harney County anymore. We had to look outward in order to get access to the information that we need. And we couldn’t afford to do that just within our self-contained library. So that was another, that was the project of 2001 and 2002, where we came on to the innovated, the interfaces, library automation systems. And we started bar coding our books in 2001, and we are still bar coding our books. It’s a really long-term process. We still have a little bit in the non-fiction section that has not been done. But it’s a continuing operation, and it has opened the world to us, it really has.

MATT: And I take it that sixty-six libraries have a common card catalogue.

JOLYN: Yes. Online.

MATT: And I shouldn’t say card catalog anymore, I should say common catalog.

JOLYN: Yes, an online catalog. Uh huh, yes.

MATT: And it’s accessible online anywhere.

JOLYN: Yes, anywhere. I mean I could, you know --- I'm just, my daughter who lives in Hawaii and is working on her master's in library science right now, has used our catalog for some of her library assignments. So yes, it accessible all over the world. It's just pretty interesting. I mean not everybody in the world can order a book, but they can sure look at it online.

MATT: Uh huh.

JOLYN: So, and then just recently, just last year we joined another consortium through LEO, the Libraries of Eastern Oregon, and the ODLC, which is the Online Digital Library, which is a place where library patrons can download books on CD, or you know, audio books onto their own computer or onto an MP3 player. Will have access to those for ten days. You know, don't have to even come in to the library. They can use their library card number and a pin number and download those. That's the way of the future, and that's what I think we have to be willing to do constantly. We have to look five and ten years ahead, into the future, and say well this is the way it's going to be. Libraries are running out of shelf space for all of the materials that people would like to have. We have to look at it from another standpoint. How can we still give them the service without using up every bit of our space in the library.

MATT: Do you run into copyright issues that way?

JOLYN: No, they have, they have copyrights, they have negotiated copyright things with the authors. Western Oregon also has this, they were actually, with Multnomah County, Lane County, Eugene Public Library, Corvallis, that instituted this, they did the pilot project for this. They have been on Libraries to Go now for about three or four years. And they gave, they opened it up to the rest of the libraries in the state this last year. And

LEO decided to come on as a group of libraries because we have so few people over here compared to Multnomah County. That our libraries could again come together in a small consortium to make a hundred thousand people. And so that's what we did. And it works great. The people that have made that jump over to MP3 players think this is the best thing since sliced bread. (Laughter)

MATT: Well that certainly opens up the question of multi-media, because now that you're using MP3's for books on tape, and I use tape loosely.

JOLYN: Uh huh.

MATT: That suggests other kinds of tapes and medium materials. What do you have besides books, and different forms of books?

JOLYN: Well libraries aren't just books anymore. And actually the library board just re-did their missions statement, and that's part of our mission statement. Libraries aren't just books anymore.

We have besides --- when Peggy was here, she started doing books on cassette tape, because our distances here are so great, that people want to listen to a book on tape or book on CD when they're driving from place to place. So she put together that. There was a collection of books on tape when I first came. Then of course CD's came on, and we thought well we have to go to that too. The price of books on CD's are quite expensive, especially the larger books. You're looking at fifty to sixty dollars a piece for a book on CD, a large book on CD. For instance the Harry Potter books which are so wide, you're averaging sixty to seventy-five dollars for a book on CD. So we have a very limited budget, we knew we had to do something else. So it's not just the space question, it's the budget question. With this over drive libraries to go, we pay about twelve to

thirteen hundred dollars a year. It is so cost effective for us to do this, that we basically have to tutor the public, and we have to keep re-enforcing the fact that we have this, this capability in our library. People need to take advantage of this. And it's not, it's not just books on tape anymore either.

Besides audio books they are now doing, they're bringing in a lot of children's books, not just adult, but children, and soon they're going to be doing videos. So, you know, I think the library keeps changing. And of course it needs to change because it's a viable institution. If you stop changing you're basically dead. So it changes constantly. I know a lot of people don't like change. And so we are consistently dragging them out of their comfort zone, because the information world is growing at such a fast rate, that we wouldn't be doing our jobs if we didn't say okay, we have to do this now, or we have to move ahead to this, or --- even though we're uncomfortable doing it too.

What I see as the future of libraries as besides a place where people can learn how to gather their own information. That's what librarians are supposed to help you with. I think, especially in rural areas, libraries are going to become more of a cultural place to come. And that's what I set as my goal for this last year, I was going to be the library director. I felt that now that all of the building things were taken care of, that we were automated, I could talk to people about doing more in the way of programming, adult programming.

We have a fantastic children's section which Suzanne Marchment took over in 2002. She is known all over the state for her fantastic children's programming, and her children's reading program. And so as soon as she took over, I knew, I wouldn't have to worry about that end.

Then I felt like the adults life-long learning type of thing really needs to be started in the library. And I have a person on our advisory board who is the Treasure Valley Community College Outreach person, and she commented to me at the last board meeting, she said, “You know I love the idea of you having two or three adult programs every month.” She said, “I look at that as a way to get people interested in a topic.” And then she said, “If they want to learn more they can come do community classes at TVCC or EOU.” For instance, you know, if you do like a one or two hour program on how to work your digital camera better, and they want to learn more, we can set up a month long class on that, where they come once a week for a month. She said, “We can work together in promoting life long learning.” And so that was my focus for this last year. I worked really closely with the Libraries of Eastern Oregon, because they see their focus now as bringing programming to rural libraries that most rural libraries could not afford to get. For instance they have a partnership with the Smithsonian American Art Museum to bring in video conferences from the Smithsonian to rural libraries. They also have a partnership with OMSI in Portland to do the same thing. In fact I think it is July 9th, we’re doing the publicity and they’re going to bring OMSI scientists in with a video conference of the China Saur, the dinosaurs from China, that they have on exhibit at OMSI right now. The people that can’t afford to go to OMSI, or that are, you know, farm kids and can’t get away, they can come up to the ESD and have an hour long session on going through and looking at all the China Saur. So it’s bringing the world to Harney County. And so LEO has been a big part of bringing that programming in, that we couldn’t have afforded to do on our own.

But another thing that's happened this year, and it's just amazing to me, how if you build it they will come. This is really true. I have felt that this county is full of really knowledgeable people. Knowledgeable in their, you know, certain interests, or scientists, there is a wealth of scientists in this community that worked for the BLM or the Forest Service, or whatever. And I thought, you know, if we could just tap into those people and ask them to come in, you know, like one month out of the year and maybe do a presentation on juniper trees, and how they are taking over Harney County. Or on, you know, waterways in Harney County, or whatever. And you know I was thinking about that, and I got a call from a scientist at the OSU Experiment Station. And she said, "You know, you're doing so many good programs." She said, "I'm going to try and set up something with all the federal agencies in Harney County and we're going to make a list of one per month for all of the winter months and --- like a forester will come in one month and do something on, you know, trees. Another month somebody will come and talk about soils. They are going to go through from October through February or March, and they're doing the organization." We'll help with the publicity, it won't cost us a thing.

And then we have a fellow who is a retired Marine instructor. He was in the Marines for a whole career, and he instructed on hot weather survival, cold weather survival, orienteering, the use of GPS. He came in, introduced himself to me and he says, "You know, I really miss that instruction part of my job." "If you think it would go over," he said, "I would love to give presentations at the library." Well he gave one on GPS, the use of GPS in May. There were 25 people in the library. And they said, "Okay,

this was too basic, we need another one that is a little harder.” So, he is going to do that. He has already been scheduled for a hot weather survival at the end of July.

And you would just be amazed, my next door neighbor is a book publisher. She came in, in December and did a program for local artists and local authors who have a hard time getting their work out there. On how to market yourself as a writer or an artist. She said, “I’d love to do that.” She said, “This is what I do for a living.” And she said, “I’d like to share that with this community.” So, it’s out there. And if you build it, if you show people that this is what you’re trying to do, they come out of the woodwork to help. And that’s what I felt like, I was just a catalyst for this to happen. And I believe that the positive attitude that we’ve tried to show the community, and our willingness to say yes to things that we didn’t quite know what we were doing, I think that showed people that, you know, the library is a place an interesting and viable place to be. And it’s a place where you can bring your family, or you can come for information, where you feel welcome. It feels like going and sitting in a comfortable chair in your own living room. And that people are there to help you if you need help. That’s the way we wanted the library to be. And I think with a lot of help from my staff, and from the people of the community we have made it that way.

MATT: Yesterday I was talking with Helen Felt in this very room about, sort of speculating about how society changes over the years, and how with the advent of technology it seems to have changed our society in many ways. But one of the ways that technology seems to be changing the way that people function, is rather than as technologists say, well technology brings people together with cell phones and e-mails and internet and so forth. And in many ways it is driving people apart, because internet

access is a very individual thing. And so you need a lot of isolation time when you use that. And it's in many ways penalizing the way that people relate to each other. But you seem to be combining the best of that, the best of internet access with increased association with people in a common place. And that's a very interesting way to counteract the isolationism that technology seems to bring in other circumstances.

JOLYN: Well I'll tell you one thing, we usually schedule our programs for six-thirty or seven in the evening. And if --- and we'll close down the internet room, because we feel programming, adult programming takes precedence over the internet. I know that there would still be people coming in to use the computers if we allowed it, but we feel like, you know, it's the face to face coming together, you really learn and you --- I can't say that enough, life long learning is what makes this world go around. If we just stopped learning when we got out of school, we'd be a dead society. And so yes, we do kind of lean towards, you know, I know the internet is a basic part of our society now, but I still think that face to face contact with people, and learning new things from another person, and not just on the internet is a better way to go. Maybe that's the old fashioned part of me. But I still think that's true.

MATT: Another interesting aspect to this, and this is also sort of bridging the gap between technology and the humanities, going back to Mrs. Luce's grant, that in spite of --- not in spite of it, in addition to everything that it has done for the library, originally it was to establish an oral history program. And this library has one of the most interesting and extensive collections of oral history I've ever seen.

JOLYN: Isn't that amazing.

MATT: It is really amazing, and it's because of that grant. So not only is this a library of volumes and materials produced by others, but you are also a publisher of your own materials based on the history of the county. Tell me a little bit about how the oral history program really got started, and how it evolved, and who were the participants, and who were the key people that made that happen.

JOLYN: Well again it went back to Claire McGill Luce. She --- I wish I could have met her. She sounds to me like an extraordinary woman, who was so far sighted in her view of the world. She stated that, in another one of her letters, she stated that the history of Harney County is a history of pioneers who came in here against huge odds and have so much to teach the people of today, you know, about hard work and about persistence and about patience, you know, and doing without. And she went on to say that she felt it was just, it should be a mandate that we preserve what they had to share with the people, you know, to come. And that was her whole premise about wanting to get an oral history program started in this library. It's evolved over the years with a whole lot of different interviewers. Pauline Braymen, who was editor of the Burns Times-Herald for many years, at one time was the interviewer. Marcus Haines was an interviewer for many years. He was on the library board for years and years. Then Sandy has, who is currently doing some, she has done others. There have been, Dorothea Purdy for many years, who is the head of the museum. She (and Barbara Lofgren) did many, many interviews. A lot of people came at the right time to continue on this foresight that Claire McGill Luce had. We all recognize that you can live a better life if you know what has come before you. It kind of sets you in history to know that, okay I'm here now but, I'm here now because other people came before me and made this a community that I could live in. I think, you

know, it's a real treasure that we realize we need to continue because today will be tomorrow's history. And I think if we all remember that and --- that's why I'm here today, is because I need to say what happened in the last nine years that made this library I believe, a better functioning piece of this county. And I hope that what I say here today will help some future librarian in making some decisions to, you know, to make the library even better.

MATT: I'm delighted to help collect this history, but now how is it disseminated once you've collected it?

JOLYN: Actually I think more and more we're going to be using that nasty technology word to get more and more of this kind of thing out, for a more easily distributable product. There is people that have contacted the Western History Room from all over the country, and some are amazed that we have as much world history as we have. Lots of times they'll be looking for a relative, doing genealogy of some kind or another, and they will be amazed, you know, we may have an interview from one of their family members that they never knew about. What we hope to do is to get all of the information, especially the indexes that we have now just currently on the old fashioned card catalog system, into a more digital format, and on to our website. We are redesigning our website right now. We have a professional web designer that is going to do that initially for us. And then one of the gals in the Western History Room will take that over. But we know that it's very important to get that basic information, if nothing else, the basic information with the indexes out there for the public to use online. That's just the way the world works now.

MATT: Do you have any plans to put the original recordings on line, or just the transcripts, or ---

JOLYN: I think what we need to do first of all is to do the indexes, and then kind of gradually build up to the others. I know my mother just passed away a few months back, and about ten years ago, just as an example, for Christmas she sat down in front of a tape recorder and she gave each one of us girls a tape of all of her childhood memories growing up in a little town in Wyoming, you know, during the depression. She gave us that gift that is just priceless to us. And I'm thinking, you know, Claire McGill Luce gave that gift to the whole of Harney County, because she thought so much about where she came from, and how she was raised, and how this place called Harney County meant so much to her, that she wanted to give a little piece of that back to the future generations. What a gift that was, you know. Because I know how much that little tape that my mother made for me and for my sisters means to me. And look, she didn't even know some of these people. And look what that gift, you know, her looking to the future gave to this community and this county, it's just amazing.

MATT: Do you have a public program on collecting oral histories, and how people can utilize this oral history room?

JOLYN: You know we haven't done anything formally. Quite often Sandy has gone and done presentations at, like the museum monthly banquets, they have like get-togethers. And she has done several presentations there. She has done one at the senior center. She has often gone out to like the Lions Club or the Kiwanis Club and given presentations. Actually Sandy and I together wrote an article for the Oregon Library Association Newsletter on even rural libraries can have special collections. Because we

felt like, this is about as rural as you can get, is Harney County. And we felt that we needed to get the basic information out there, for small libraries that had access to a really good collection. For instance, the Fossil Library is in a renovated old fire house. But they have the, they live in a very interesting place, you know, with all of the fossil beds around there. They could do a special collection just on fossils. And if they wanted to start a special collection, what we did was we laid down the very basic things that had to be done in order for a library to get a special collection going. We felt, there was kind of an unspoken feeling that we needed to get this information out to other small libraries that may want to go in that direction, but didn't know where to start. So we wrote an article for the OLA Quarterly Journal, (Fall 2007, Vol.13, No. 3) and then just recently at the Oregon Library Association in Washington, Library Association met together this year. They meet together every five years. And Suzanne Marchment, our children's person, and Beth Coahran who is our Treasurer of our Foundation, and I, presented a seminar for how you can turn your rural library around in eight years or less. Just say yes. (Laughter) And we had a full to capacity audience, and it was pretty gratifying to hear that the basic things that we had to tell are so needed by all of the libraries that attended. We had to learn it by trial and error. And we thought, you know, it would save so much time if somebody would share with them that this was what you do first, this is what you do second, this is what you do third. You do what you can do with the amount of money you have at the time. And you can do a lot of things that don't cost a thing. To raise an awareness in your community, to get people, volunteers in to help. You can do anything you set your mind too. And of course a lot of people said, "Well we don't have hardly any budget, what can we do?" Well we always had an answer for them, you

get your friends together to come and help clean the place up. It was just a matter of having a positive attitude. And basically stepping out with the faith that the right people will come to help you at the right time. That has been absolutely the way it's been in my nine years here as library director. If it hadn't been for the people that came out of the woodwork to help me when I needed help, it wouldn't have happened. But again I think it's that positive attitude, you keep a smile on your face no matter how much you're feeling down in the dumps, and you just keep putting one step in front of another. And I think it will all come out, it all works.

MATT: That did happen, didn't it, with this oral history room.

JOLYN: It absolutely did.

MATT: How did that come about?

JOLYN: The Oral History Room, well, you know, the oral history we've had for a long time, but the Oral History Room was not really a room. It was like three or four file cabinets. And with the Western History Room, you know, we kind of incorporated the oral history into the Western History, because it is just a really good transition from one to the other. The oral history is really Harney County. The Western History encompasses Washington and Oregon, and Montana, the Northwest basically. But Harney County is the heart and soul of that oral history project. It just so easily goes into that room, that we don't think of one without the other. The oral history, I think, it's exactly what Claire McGill Luce wanted it to be. It's just a, in their own words kind of thoughts of the pioneers that made this county the way it is today.

MATT: Specifically I was really asking about how the recording room come about, because there were very few libraries in this state that have a room dedicated to collecting oral histories.

JOLYN: Well that was, that's a nice story in itself. Sandy was working, it was several years back now, she was in the oral history, or in the Western History Room, it was after the Western History Room opened. And people come in and visit all the time. People from other parts of Oregon. And one day this elderly lady came in with her daughter and they sat down and they were so enthusiastic, they said what a beautiful room this is. And you've got it so well organized, everything is just great. Well come to find out it was Helen Felt, and her daughter Charlene. Helen was a Hines School teacher for years and years and years. Her husband was a jeweler here in Burns for years. Charlene grew up, graduated from Burns High School. And eventually after she retired Helen moved to Western Oregon, and they just come back for a visit. And Helen looked around her, you know, and she was enthralled with the room. She looked at Sandy, and she said, "Do you need anything else?" And Sandy, of course, always, you know, being one step ahead of the game said, "Oh, we would love to turn that little tutoring room across the hall into an oral history recording room." She said, "You know, oral history sometimes they are a lot harder to do when you go out with your own, you know, equipment out to somebody's house with the dog barking in the background, or the TV set on in another room." She said, "It would be so nice to have a nice quiet room within the library that we could do oral histories, you know, in house." And Helen said, "Well how much would that cost?" And of course Sandy, you know, she is always ready. She said, "Well we figured it would be about ten thousand dollars." And so Helen took out her checkbook and wrote a

check. And it's in those kind of instances that you just have to smile, because it all comes together. It's like serendipitous. It just works.

But you know, the library has had other experiences of that too. We, there is a fellow in town who I won't say his name, but he has a small ranch outside of town, and he is a voracious reader. He loves, he loves reading fictional mystery books, and intrigue books. And he came in one day shortly after he had purchased this small ranch, and he had talked to a member of our library foundation. And he said, "You know, I don't have any family." He said, "I'm in my 70's now," and he says, "I'm writing a will." And he said, "I'm going to put the library in the will." And he said, "Basically the library is going to get everything, because I like to read books." And he said, "I come to the library every week, and I want new books." And he said, "So you're going to get everything, but there is only one condition." And he said, "Well what is that?" And he said, "It all has to go for books." (Laughter) So you know what, it's just, when you're nice to people, when you provide a nice facility for people to come and use, they give back, they give back. And I can't state that enough. They take ownership in this building, and this place, and this idea of a place. They take ownership in that. And that's what libraries should be. It's not my library, it's our library. And the people in this community and this county, I think they realize that now. I think they realize that hey, that's my library. That's our library. And we need to do what we can do to make it viable, to make it so it's always open. And that's why, you know, the Claire McGill Luce endowment fund, we hope to make that continue too grow, so eventually it may be in fifteen, maybe in twenty years, the library won't have to count on the county for budgets, that maybe we can become self-supporting. I know the county would love that, because they have a lot of

other, you know, budgeting problems that they're trying to iron out, and it would be a big help to them if the library could become self-sustaining. That's a very long term goal. And the one that I think is quite doable.

MATT: Does the county still maintain the Luce fund?

JOLYN: No, actually a year and a half --- well it was actually two years ago in July, the library board, there was a big change-over in the library foundation board after this room was completed. The people that had been on the original board were tired after all of the fund raising and all of the expansion, and they just kind of wanted to be done. So we had to look for a lot of new people to come on the board at that time. Well what we came up with was a very, very dynamic group of women --- (Laughter) Alpha females they're called, that felt it was imperative to get the county to agree to transfer that money. So they put their heads together, they totally re-did their by-laws, they did acceptance policies, they did all --- they jumped through every hoop absolutely to get everything, all the T's crossed and I's dotted. And they did a presentation to the county court, and they brought in a representative from the Oregon Community Foundation, and then they brought in the district attorney to answer legal questions. They did a presentation, and the county court finally decided that it was probably the wise thing to do, to write a one million, seven hundred and fifty thousand dollar check to the Library Foundation, who in turn wrote another check right then to the Oregon Community Foundation. And an endowment was started through the Oregon Community Foundation for the benefit of the library. That happened two years ago, and probably just in the nick of time. Because it was after that that the timber receipts to the county started really falling off. And, you know, the counties now are kind of facing a lot of budget shortfalls in the near future.

And if we hadn't secured that money when we did, I'm afraid it would have been gone. It was just a blessing that everything came together at that time.

MATT: Now Steve Grasty seems to have been a key person here in supporting all of this. And even though he is a county judge he still has a great deal of influence in library operations. How so, how is it?

JOLYN: Steve has been a huge support for getting this library where it is today. He saw the need to update the infrastructure, you know, like for instance the lights and everything else that needed to be repaired and maintained. He had a lot of vision that way. He realized that we needed to do the automation and to move forward. He was the one that basically said maybe it's time for the county court to sit down and talk to the Foundation about this. He was the one that actually instituted it. I think the Foundation would have waited another year or so. But Steve said, you know, even if we don't transfer the whole amount, we probably need to think about part of it. We could start with twenty-five thousand even, because that is the minimum that you can put into the Oregon Community Foundation. And he said we need to sit down as a group and talk about this. So he was the one that instituted this, and it was after that, that the Foundation said, you know, we should probably shoot for the whole ball of wax. And thank heaven that they did, because like I said if they hadn't, things might not have worked out as well as they did. And this way the money is safe, short of, you know, the stock market going way down like it has in the past six months. But for all intents and purposes Oregon Community Foundation is a really firm, has really firm standing within the State of Oregon. They are going to do the very best they can do with that money. And I think, you know, once the

current situation goes away, and it usually always does, we'll start making money again.

We did go over the two million dollar mark last year.

MATT: Oh, so the fund is growing?

JOLYN: Yes, the fund is growing. This past quarter it has gone down just a little bit.

But, you know, it has really good rate of return for the most part.

MATT: And you're continuing to put into that fund? Or ---

JOLYN: What, actually until we get big donations, you know, like this fellow who has the library in his will, they will be putting in when they get bequests. And the Foundation, that's a big goal of theirs now is to push that information out to the general public. Take brochures to lawyer's offices, and to accountant offices, and to the funeral home. And basically have an article in the newspaper maybe quarterly about if you want to leave something in your will to the library, this is how you can do that. They also plan on doing, in fact I think they're going to do this soon about the long term vision of the Library Foundation, and how hopefully within 15 or 20 years the library can be self-supporting. And at one time, just not that long ago I was having a conversation with Steve, and he said, "You know when that time comes," he said, "the library will still be supported by the county to a small extent." Because he said, "The way he looks at it, it will always be called Harney County Library." And he said, "You know, we'll always put in something to the benefit of the library." But he said, "At the time in which the vast majority will come from that endowment." He said, "We can do a resolution stating that now that the library has its own district, and is not really funded by the county, so to speak, they're self sustaining." He said, "We can write a resolution to that effect." He

said, “That’s a few years coming down the road.” But he said, “You know, we’re working toward it.”

MATT: Are there other people outside of the library besides Steve who have been exceptional in their support?

JOLYN: Uh huh, there have been. Probably I’d have to say the current Foundation has been just phenomenal in the amount of time and in the foresight they have used in basically getting this money transferred. We at one time ---

MATT: Who are those people?

JOLYN: Okay, Debbie Ausmus who has her own business downtown. She is in the insurance business. She is our chairperson. Beth Coahran who is our treasurer of the Foundation. Carla Burnside who is an archeologist with the Malheur Field Station is on the board. Flo Merritt who works for the ESD is on the board. Fred Flippence who is the accountant for Harney Electric is on the board. He is not the treasurer, but you know, he points out anything that needs to be brought up. He is the lone male on the board, and he is very good. He is the one that has been appointed to go and talk, give quarterly updates to the county court, because they really like him, you know, a person of the same gender to come and talk to them. Then Helen Hardwick who is a retired teacher is also on the board. And Regina Cashen who is the Eastern Oregon University long distance person. She is the secretary of the board. So they have done a tremendous amount of work to get this library to be in the direction of self-sustainment. And that’s really a big job.

MATT: Any others?

JOLYN: Well I have to say that Sandy Crittenden, she is, you know, basically retired from the Western Room thing now. Even though I told her she would never be able to

stay away totally. And so she is taking on the oral history interview, doing just part-time work in the library. But I have to give her almost total credit in getting the idea of a Western History Room off the ground. She and I, before we even knew what we were doing, we did a road trip to Western Oregon, and we went to OSU to visit their special collections, their Linus Pauling collections. We talked to the curator of that. We went to the Monmouth Public Library that has a very nice special collection. We visited the Abbey Library in Lafayette that has --- they have illuminated manuscripts there that were just amazing to see. We wanted to see how various types of libraries do special collections. And the only way we could do that was to go visit. And we learned some very helpful interesting things by doing that. Then we came back and we sat down together for many, many hours and just said, okay, now how can we do this? And how should we do that? And how should we inventory? And how should we catalogue? And it was just Sandy's persistence more than anything. Because here I was trying to, you know, juggle everything else that goes on in the library. Sandy was so committed to the establishment of a Western History Room with the oral history being part of that, that she basically made it work. And how tremendously, you know, with some of the intricacies of doing some of the fund raising. She, I have to give her almost total credit for getting that off the ground. Her passion is what did it.

You have to have the passion for a project in order, sometimes, to get it off the ground. She had the passion for the Western History Room. Just like Suzanne Marchment has the passion for the children's services part of the library. And I have the passion for making the library as a whole become more a part of this community. And not just the building where people would come to, you know, to check out a best seller.

No, we wanted more for the library than that. So basically you have to have like minded people that want to see success in various aspects of the library come together in order for it all to work. I couldn't have the passion for all of those things. I had to say, "Okay, you need to be in charge of this, and you need to be in charge of this, and I'll kind of over-look the whole shebang." And that's how it worked, that's how it worked.

MATT: In physics there is the principle of for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Were there opposition forces, and sometimes they are institutionalized like from a hospital that was competing for the same funds, or a fire department or a police department, or a public works. Or was there competition for funding there, or even individuals who thought that the library was just a waste of time, and too much effort was going into that?

JOLYN: You know, I really didn't see that. I think people were so ready to see changes in the library that they weren't going to put any obstacles in our path. One of the county commissioners wasn't all that thrilled with us spending a lot of money because he tends to, you know, he sees the big picture and sees that some entities within the county are really hard up, and it kind of bothered him that the library seemed to have more money than anybody else. But, you know, when we pointed out to him that it was Claire McGill Luce's funds that did this, and they were expressly for the purpose of the library's use. Well he kind of came around after that. But outside of him I really can't think of anybody that wasn't really behind our succeeding.

And the thing is when we were doing our expansion of the library, the hospital was in the midst of fund raising for a whole new hospital. The ESD Early Childhood Center was trying to get grants written for their new building. There were a lot of other

things competing for some of the same granting funds as we were getting. But you know what, more than anything we were helping each other. Because Donna Schnitker who is the head of the early childhood center, she is quite a regular patron of the library. And she'd come in and we'd put our heads together and I'll say, "Well how are you doing on your funding?" And she said, "Well how are you doing on your funding?" And she said, "We got such and such amount of money from them." And I said, "Well we caught this one." It was more of a support system than enemies, you know. It was, we were all working towards the betterment of the county and the community. And I think that is how you make progress. You shouldn't have to put obstacles in other's way in order for you to get a little bit ahead. It wasn't that way at all. It was, you know, we're going through the same thing that you are, and you know, maybe you could try this, or maybe you could call them. It was a real support system more than anything.

MATT: Obviously you have a successor. And I'm just wondering at this point with your stepping aside, what do you see remains to be done? What are the big projects that you would like to see accomplished at the Harney County Library?

JOLYN: Well my, the new library director that will follow me, her name is Cheryl Hancock, and she is from Prineville. She has worked at the Crook County Library for 16 years. She has been the assistant librarian for about five years. She has been actually the assistant library director for five years. She has lots of experience. And I've talked to her, you know, she has been over here for about two weeks learning the job and all the intricacies and differences of Harney County Library. I've talked to her in depth about what my vision is for the future for this library. I think that she and I share that feeling that adult programming is just vital, especially in an isolated community like, you know,

we're still considered frontier because we're 130 miles away from any bigger city. She realizes it's vital to keep adult programming going, and the life-long learning philosophy. She was quite busy at the Prineville Library doing the same thing. She has a lot of background in programming. The other thing that I see as, you know, is important and which we've done all while I've been here is long-range planning. We did short range and long range planning. And we come together once a year with a combined Library Foundation and the Library Advisory Board to meet in a group and re-establish priorities for what we think needs to be done in certain years. And we have accomplished just about everything that was on that five year plan. But the very long range plan is that eventually we will need a new library. And the biggest drawback with this library is that we are land-locked, and there is really no further room to expand. What we're really lacking is a conference room, a meeting room of any size at all. When we have programming we have to move all the tables and chairs in the main library and have our program right in the library proper. That's very inconvenient, and it kind of disrupts some of the, you know, the library activities. It is not the best way to do it. But like I say, we're handicapped now with the lack of space.

We, the Library Foundation has talked about this quite a bit. They are thinking along the range of a 15 year plan for a new library. I know the county commissioners don't want to go there. They know there is a lot of immediate problems in their future, and they don't even want to think about a new library at this part. But I really think it's the mission of the Foundation to look ahead for that kind of thing. There are two very exceptional grant writers that are part of the Foundation Board, and so of course they know the right people to go to for things like that. They are even looking now at how

they could secure a block of land to do this, and maybe working with the people that own the land currently to do kind of a half donation kind of a thing. They are all the time looking ahead for things like that. And I think that's what makes a Foundation Board really good.

So I think that's the long range plan that eventually there will need to be a new library to better suite the needs of the next generation. The new library would probably encompass one whole floor for the Western History Room, Oral History Collection. That could be closed off in the evening, you know, so that it would only be open certain hours of the day. It might have a floor for conference rooms, and like a place to have art shows, that kind of thing. And then the main floor would just be the circulation area, the stacks and that kind of thing. We have this vision in our heads of what it could be, and I think you --- you know you have to revise your vision as you complete one thing, you need to make a new vision. Well this is the new vision a little bit down the road. And it will encompass all of the new technology needed to, you know, for that next generation.

MATT: I keep thinking of the old post office as a wonderful location for something, and as you were talking about that --- the old post office would be grand. Let's pause at the moment. I think someone is knocking at the door.

JOLYN: Okay.

MATT: Let's just pause for a second.

JOLYN: Okay.

MATT: Alright, we're resuming, recording the interview with Jolyn Wynn, the librarian of the Harney County Library. And actually we're probably coming to a close because we've covered an awful lot of territory today. But I'm curious about your feelings

through all of this, how you've been wrapped up in this, I mean this has been your rational almost for being here in Burns, and how you feel about leaving it.

JOLYN: Well it is going to be really difficult. You know this has been, this has been my life and my passion for the last nine years. And I really believe that everybody has a purpose in life, and a different purpose at various times of their life. I think probably my purpose and even getting to Burns was to do this for the community. And there is a lot of nostalgia in the whole idea of leaving. But I had quite a plan of work set out for me at my interview. And I have accomplished every single one of the things that they wanted me to do. And I, like the last two big, two big things that I wanted to accomplish I did last year and this year. Last year it was the final, the repainting of the interior of the library and putting in new carpeting for the first time in 35 years. And then this year it was the expanded programming, and getting that really set into what the library does as a mission. And once I had those two things accomplished I thought, you know, change is good. And I feel like I've put my whole heart and soul into this library in the last nine years. And that maybe it was time for me to move on and let somebody else with a little different perspective and new ideas come in and start anew.

I think, you know, there is something to be said for change. Sometimes I think people if they stay in a job too long they get in a rut, and I did not want that to happen. I just felt it was a good time for me to go.

MATT: That would be a good lesson to pass on to politicians, wouldn't it?

JOLYN: Yes, it would. Yes it would indeed. (Laughter)

MATT: Earlier, when I got here this morning we did a little photo session and we took a picture out in front of the library by a wonderful little statue. I wonder if you would describe that and say how that came about.

JOLYN: Well actually that statue was given to us by a friend of the library who was actually what we call the basket lady. When we did all of our fund raising dinners we did these baskets for silent auction, and her name is Joanie Henry. And I knew she was quite good at putting things together, and I kind of twisted her arm and said, “Joanie how would you like to wrap these baskets to look really attractive?” And so she hemmed and hawed around and I said, “I know you can do this.” So she ended up doing it for five straight years. And like I said, there was four years of baskets. She must have put together 250 to 300 baskets she wrapped. Anyway she wanted to do something special for the library in honor of her mother, in memory of her mother. And her mother was Betty Clemens. And so she said, “You know my mother loved to read, and I think what I would like to do is to give the library a statue, a bronze statue of children reading, and put on that statue in memory of my mother.” And so she gave us that last year, and when the landscaping project from the Ford family leadership group was underway, that statue was installed in the front of the library. And it’s a wonderful statue. It’s funny about that statue, right after it was installed there was a little kid that was coming into, he was coming into the library with his mom. And he stopped at that library (statue) and just started talking to those kids. And then another time there was a little dog that came up and put his paws right up on the lap of one of the little girls and just looked at her, like you know, she ought to pet him now. (Laughter) It’s a great statue.

MATT: What was the leadership project?

JOLYN: The Ford Family Leadership Project, occasionally the Ford Family Foundation does these projects within communities that they support, and the Ford family was a big timber family based out of Roseburg area who got a lot of their timber resources from these smaller communities, and they wanted to give back to those communities where they made their wealth. And so occasionally, about every other year they will put on these leadership groups for community people to learn how to step into leadership roles within their community. And that, let's see two years ago this would have happened, a group of people came together and they said okay, we want --- They had to do a project within the community, start it up, raise the money for it, finish the project. And it was decided to do the library landscaping as the project. Well they earned by selling bricks which are now out in the front part of the library. They sold bricks, and they did jail and bail, and several other things to raise money. They raised somewhere in the realm of \$25,000 in order to do all of this landscaping work. They put new cement in the front and then they raised it up to put those paving stones, you know, with memorial inscriptions on them in the front. They did a pergola for, so that Suzanne can do some of her outside summer reading activities outside. A lot of people who walk to the library sit out there waiting for the library to open at noon. And if they get there early they have a place to sit. They put benches along the side of the library. They put a walking path along the side of the library which was previously just gravel and impossible to walk on. They extended the sidewalk to the street, because there used to be just gravel there. It was unsafe to walk. They planted new trees in the back. They planted even some over by the museum, because they felt like nice visitation makes a more welcoming appearance to the front and to the sides of the library. They did a lot of work. And they

came together and did it as a group. And I think they just made --- they put really the finishing touches on the renovation of the library. They made it just beautiful.

MATT: How wonderful. We didn't really talk about this except tangentially, we had a brief conversation about the museum. It seems that the library is moving into a lot of areas on history, and collection of history which is traditionally what a museum does. What is your relationship with the museum, and how do you think that that will move forward into the future? How will that relationship change?

JOLYN: We hope to become more and more in partnership with the museum. We have been, to a certain extent, because Dorothea Purdy who was the head of the museum for years and years, was also the interviewer for our oral history for years and years. So there was that, you know, partnership to some extent. But as time goes by we see that there is some overlap. And we have done more and more partnership things with the museum over the last year or so. The museum actually bought a \$2,000 fire proof file cabinet for us to store in our rare book room. And we are actually storing their photographs now, because they don't have a good way to store them over there in the museum. They have recently hired a twenty hour per week curator for the museum, and she is redoing all of the inventory system. What we hope is that the museum will come to the realization that maybe we are the better ones to store, like the paper materials and the photographs that they have. We have more of a climate control situation, and they are more protected over here than they might be in the museum. Whereas they can do the hands on type memorabilia items better than we ever could. We have a very limited space, but we are very good at storing paper and photographs.

They are going to be getting the same software system, called Past Perfect Software, that we use for our photographs. And the new curator is going to come over and visit a lot and get some training from Karen Nitz, who is our current Western Room person. I see a lot of cooperation there because I think we can help each other more than we ever have in the past. Because we need to acknowledge, you know, that we're in this together. We're both in the business of storing and recording history. Then more of the, you know, the hands on ---

MATT: Artifacts.

JOLYN: --- artifacts and memorabilia, with us doing more of the written material. You know, we're in this together. And basically, I don't know if you were aware of this, but it was the museum that actually gave the land to the library to build here. It actually was museum property and they allowed the library to build here.

MATT: Well the partnership does seem natural.

JOLYN: Oh, it does, you know, and why be at loggerheads when you can work together. I really believe that. You can just accomplish so much more when you can work together as a group.

MATT: Has there been a history of rivalry?

JOLYN: There has been, you know, this is ours, and this is ours kind of thing a few times. But I've tried to get away from that totally because I think we can help each other so much more if we can agree on, you know, help each other and then agree on, you know, we can store this for you, you can come and get, you have access to it at any time, you know. We can help each other that way, and it's for the betterment of both of us.

MATT: You'll be leaving in a couple of weeks, and I'm wondering what or who will you miss the most?

JOLYN: Oh, that's going to be hard to answer. I'm really going to miss the staff, you know, that we went through thick and thin together. Claire Larson has been our circulation manager from, she was hired just six months after I started, so she has been with me from, all through thick and thin. Laurie O'Connor has been our cataloguer all of this time. She was hired on part-time in 2000. And of course Sandy, Sandy said she was going to retire before me, so you know, she wouldn't have to be here without me. But of course she had to come back. I'm going to miss all of the staff because if you don't have a good staff we couldn't have done everything that we did without the staff that we have. I'm also going to miss the patrons, you know, that are just the solid patrons that come in every week or every two weeks to get new books, or to talk about things that are going on in the community. I'm going to miss the people that come for all the programs that love that idea of life long learning, and want to be a part of whatever we do at the library. I'm actually going to miss the county court, I'm going to miss Steve Grasty's support. He was so, he was so supportive of everything I did. He really helped make it happen. You know I could go on and on. I'm going to miss the whole county. I'm going to miss the scenery, I'm going to miss the people and the place, you know, the setting of Harney County is unique. And of course every place has its own personality. But Harney County is a really special place. And I've noticed the thing about this county is the majority of people are always upbeat. They have that, you know we can do it, attitude as opposed to, you know, the glass is half empty. Which some other counties that I've been aware of have that attitude. And that would be really hard to make any progress in

anything. You have to have an upbeat attitude in order to be a success in anything you do.

And I think this community and the people in this county have been so appreciative of things that we did to help them that I'm going to miss that support. I'm going to miss seeing them, you know. From anybody from, you know, the rural school teacher in Frenchglen to the school teacher in Riley, you know. I mean I know all of those people, and I worked with them on different programs. And I'm going to miss the libraries of Eastern Oregon people who gave us so much support in making, especially making my way through un-chartered territory with, like automation and --- It helps to, you can't be in a vacuum and really progress in any kind of endeavor. And if it hadn't been for that support of other libraries and other librarians in this region of Eastern Oregon, I couldn't have done what I've done here. I don't know, I could go on and on and on. It's just ---- it's going to be --- I'm going to leave a big hunk of my heart here in this county.

MATT: Okay, counter point.

JOLYN: Uh huh.

MATT: What or who will you miss the least?

JOLYN: Oh --- (Laughter) Well I'm going to miss the least some people come into this library with --- and Claire the library assistant says --- it's always those internet people, those computer people that cause the most trouble. There is always some of those people that want to stay on longer than their designated hour. Some of those people I'm not going to miss that much. (Laughter) That's --- but you know what, I can't think of anybody else. I think it's just, it's been a great run, it's just been a great run and I'll

never forget it. It will be a part of me for a long time. And I think I was meant to be here at this time. And now I'm meant to go on.

MATT: Well I neglected to bring in a box of tissues, so I'm glad we didn't quite get to that point.

JOLYN: Me too.

MATT: This has been really, really interesting, and I thank you for sitting down here and talking about all of this and sort of wrapping up a wonderful career here at the library.

JOLYN: Well thank you Matt.

MATT: We have been talking with Jolyn Wynn, the, stepping down, retiring librarian of the Harney County Library. This was Sunday, June 29th, 2008. This interview was part of the Harney County Oral History Program, and was recorded at the Harney County Library, the home of Jolyn Wynn for the past 8 years. And the interviewer is Matt Simek of Newberg, Oregon. Thank you again, and best wishes in Wyoming.

JOLYN: Oh, thanks Matt.

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