

Interview with Lynn Scheller- May 28, 2002

L- Lynn Scheller

D- Darrah Heath

D: This interview is being conducted on behalf of the oral history program of Century High School. The interviewee is Lynn Scheller and the interviewer is Darrah Heath. The interview took place at Century High School on May 28th, 5th period. Just to get things started off, what was your first involvement with Century High School?

L: Um, I was named to the Planning Team at least a year and a half before it opened and then as a member of the planning team I served on lots of the sub-committees for the planning of the school. I served on the name the school and the mascot. The selection of the school colors that was a different committee so all the colored tiles you see, I was on that committee. And, I was on the design team for the auditorium. That's really kind of my special baby is the design of the auditorium, because I had a theatre background. So those were kind of my beginning committees.

D: So did you choose to come to Century or did they assign you to be on the Planning Team?

L: Well, applying to be on the planning team was a definite choice. A lot of people wanted to be on the planning team. It was the first time Hillsboro had built a new school in a long time and so it was seen as a really positive thing to do, so definitely I chose to come here.

D: So basically you just applied for the Planning Team?

L: Right, and then Mr. Barnekoff interviewed us, we went through an interview process and then he selected the Planning Team of 14.

D: Ok, what other schools have you been involved with?

L: Um, in this district I started at Glencoe and taught there for three years in '85 and then I went to Evergreen and taught Freshmen at Evergreen until I came here. Prior to that I worked in Beaverton.

D: How would you compare at, say Glencoe since it's a high school, compared to Century?

L: As far as the building and the design and the philosophy, all of those parts of Century are really exciting because we are cutting edge, we got to try new things, got to have new technology. That part was very, very exciting. The student body here is, uh, different, a different mix than the student body at Glencoe. So that was different as well. I would never go back to Glencoe, I would choose to stay here if that tells you something.

D: So on an educational standpoint is there really that much difference between Century and Glencoe?

L: I'm going to say yes, of course, because we moved ahead with curriculum when we built Century, we had an opportunity to try some new things. It's easier to open a new building and do new things than to try to implement change in an existing building.

D: As you were selected to be on the Planning Team, what decisions did you guys make? What was the whole purpose of the team?

L: Everything from the building ground up, as I said colors of the tile and things that simple and then we got into the design of the curriculum. How did we want the curriculum to look? Um, Mr. Morton and I were the two English teachers so we got to

look at how we wanted the English department to look. What did we philosophically, what did we think teachers should have that came to Century? And then when it came time to interview teachers to come and teach here the people on the Planning Team participated in the interviews and helped do the interviews and select the staff.

D: On the Planning Team were there people from different departments?

L: Uh huh, every department.

D: Ok, so when you made decisions on the Planning Team was it a democratic process or how did that work?

L: Sometimes it was very democratic, sometimes it was Mr. Barnekoff saying "Well, I want it this way" and sometimes it was dominant people who had a stake in what we were talking about we would allow to make those decisions. But everything was collaborative, we talked everything over, brought it to the table, hashed it out and then came to a decision.

D: So Mr. Barnekoff as the principal, did he have more say than other members of the Planning Team then?

L: Ultimately yes, but he wasn't that kind of leader. He was the principal, he was in charge, the buck stopped at his door but he is the kind who really is inclusive and it was important to him to get all of our ideas.

D: And what were some of the challenges you guys faced on the team?

L: Lets see, um. Well one of the challenges was deciding if we wanted to open the building on a block schedule or wait a year, you know hire teachers and wait a year. That was a tough decision. We could have just opened and had it done and saved ourselves a certain amount of trouble, but on the other hand we wanted the whole staff, we wanted to be inclusive to and involve the whole staff in our decision to that was a challenge.

D: How did you guys resolve that?

L: Well, we decided ultimately we decided to put it off a year so we could be inclusive and include every staff member. Um, it was a group discussion.

D: That makes sense, so what were some of the greatest satisfactions that you had as a member of the team?

L: One of my personals is the auditorium. I love that place, it's my place. I helped design it, I had a vision for it, um, I had two other auditoriums in the state that I was using as kind of a model in my mind and I had met with the architects and designers, just threw out everything I could hope for in a high school thinking "they'll cut this, they'll cut that" but no, we got it all. We got it all, I mean this is a premier auditorium in the state. So, um, that to me is really, really exciting to see that come about.

D: Who else was involved with you on that?

L: Janine Stassons from Glencoe because she was the other drama teacher at the time. We were the two teachers with input.

D: How did the Planning Team hire the new staff for Century, was there a process to go through?

L: Yea, a huge process. We first had a list of people who wanted to come here and there were lots of them. And then Mr. Barnekoff, Phil just divided up the teams and asked us to sit in on interviews he thought we would have some knowledge on. I helped interview some English people, I helped the newspaper person, the theatre people. We all sat in on interviews and we had a set batch of questions that we asked everyone and they had to do with block scheduling and their philosophy. And then we had other questions too and

then we came back as a group and just started making lists and prioritizing. And then you don't get everyone you want, there are district politics involved too. At the district level they would say "you can have this many that you want but then you need to move some of these others around."

D: Were there any specific qualities the team was looking for in teachers?

L: Yea, we were looking for open-minded and willing to block schedule because that was important to us and willing to work on teams. We knew teaming was coming in various forms. We wanted freshman teams, we wanted advanced CAM teams later. Those were questions we wanted everyone to say yes to.

D: As part of the Planning Team you were obviously involved in the beginning. What was your initial vision of Century High School?

L: Very idealistic, I came from a team setting at Evergreen. I worked on a 4-person integrated team and we had been together for eight years and it was really, really successful. Kids really liked it, we liked it and we had high achievement levels. So my vision when we said "we're going to set Century up in teams, we're even going to have integrated offices for the teachers." I just envisioned all these integrated pods around the building functioning wonderfully. That was very idealistic in the high school setting.

D: So how much of the vision do you think has actually been realized in the years the school has been open now?

L: I think we're obviously on a block schedule, that was part of our vision. We have a lot of teams at the freshmen level, sophomore level, and now I'm doing the senior CAM and that's a team. So we are making a lot of progress there. It feels good.

D: What were some of the barriers to realizing the vision, specifically with the pods and team building?

L: All of the 100 staff people didn't necessarily share that specific vision and didn't want to be put randomly on a team with other staff members they didn't know. They didn't necessarily want to integrate their curriculum so that's been tough. And a lot of them coming from traditional high school settings, coming from Hilhi, coming from Glencoe, that's their mindset and so that was what they could see themselves doing. So just breaking down old paradimes was probably a barrier.

D: Based on your experience with the development of Century High School, is there any advice you'd give to the Planning Team for Liberty?

L: That's an interesting question. No, because my best advice I suppose to save them trouble is to be realistic in their expectations but I would never advice anyone of that. I would always advise them to go in with your idealistic goals and go for them. I think they're doing fine.

D: What are some of the most significant changes you've noticed since CHS has opened and evolved in this period of time? Is it much different than when it first opened?

L: Oh yes, just because when we opened we had no traditions. There wasn't a Jagfest, there wasn't a freshmen orientation, there was nothing. So that's been really exciting for me too to be involved in developing some of the traditions and I mean we just finished Jagfest so that's big on my mind, but that's a nice tradition and that was developed in the last four years. Watching the use of our technology develop has been really exciting. We're doing, I don't think students here realize how fabulous the things we're doing in technology are. We have students getting pieces aired on CNN. We're doing just some really cool things that other high schools aren't. So that's exciting.

D: How would you describe the culture of Century, specifically among the staff?

L: It's really very, very difficult to have a social life in a staff that is number one so large, and number two so spread out. We have a lot of trouble, I mean we refer to ourselves as North enders and South enders. And it's like "oh, hello north ender friend I see you maybe a couple of times a year" although I really, really value some of the people down there. I mean Mrs. Duyckinck, I never see her. I would love to see her regularly so that puts a crimp in our social life. However, our offices give us a really nice small social circle of people from different curriculum areas so that social setting has worked out really well. If we can just find a way to communicate better among all the offices.

D: Have you noticed any real specific things about the culture among students? Are there any specific groups?

L: There are groups, a little. No more than what is natural. Now when we opened that was not the case and I'm sure you've probably heard some of the stories about when we first opened and we were surprised at the students social interactions because there was immediate confrontations between the asians, the latinos and the christian students.

Those three sub-cultures were just immediately in conflict. We had to get a large police presence, we had to bring in the police daily to deal with this and the first probably three months we opened no one was more stunned than all of us. You know, we opened the doors to this shiny new fabulous building and in come the students and they didn't care about being in this wonderful new building, they were just after each other and doing their business. Once we got that cleaned up in the first year I think it's been an increasingly more healthy atmosphere, more accepting, we're still very diverse but we don't face the same kinds of problems that we had then.

D: Is this original intended culture that CHS was viewed with?

L: I think we're getting better, you know you never arrive at an idea. I feel acceptance in my classes of races, intellectual levels, um, I don't see any problems with discrimination.

D: Was diversity an issue that the Planning Team talked about?

L: We looked at it but we looked at it through our eyes coming from the other buildings we've been at and we had never faced asian, latino gang problems. Maybe in a small way but we just, no, we weren't prepared for it. We had talked about it but we weren't prepared.

D: Getting off the whole culture subject, could you describe the evolution of the morning announcement system?

L: That's exactly what I was talking about in using technology. It has to do with students in the JagTV class, see there wasn't even a JagTV class. We didn't even do them over, it took us probably a year to get them over the network system and then when we finally got the system, the hardware, up and running we didn't have the students trained. So, yea, they were pretty elementary you know just reading daily announcements to a camera. But now with the JagTV class and the sophisticated tools, plus with Mr. Allen expertise, because he's really an expert in his field, we've got, I mean, I think it looks very professional.

D: Are there any new activities since Century opened that you've been involved with.

L: No, I started the Key Club and that was really important to me and got that off the ground for a few years and passed that on and Jagfest has sort of been my thing.

D: What about the FAME CAM?

L: Oh, oh, the FAME CAM, of yes, that's my newest. I'm still in the middle of that right now. Ok, the FAME CAM is students from all the arts, television, publications, theatre, music, drama, and visual students. We pick the top students from those classes as seniors and we have an integrated block that Mr. Allen and I team teach. And I do the Humanities portion and he supposedly does the rest but really we integrate the whole thing. So what they're doing is getting their English credit plus doing a glorified senior project and next week on Thursday night is their senior showcase and they will all be doing either a major art show, band students have written, composed, music and they will be performing their music that they've composed, our video students will be showing all the things they've had on CNN and they'll be showing that on a continuous loop. So, it's just a big senior exposition night and the next morning they'll get corded at the senior assembly, so they'll get cords for being in the CAM.

D: How did that get started?

L: Well, it's a state program, the other half the CIM, the CAM and it's supposedly coming onboard in the state in 2007 but our school when we opened it from the beginning Mr. Allen and Mrs. Cochran and I envisioned that as being one of the pieces down the road. So, last summer we got some extended contract time and all of the arts teachers in the building met and worked on this and so we wrote the loose curriculum and then Mr. Allen and I, this being our first year, have refined the curriculum. And we're one of the premier programs in the state for the arts CAM.

D: How many other programs are there?

L: How many CAMS?

D: How many other high schools offer the arts CAM?

L: Well, there are different versions of it and some offer kind of little small pieces of it. There are probably five or six in the state.

D: That's really not that many in the entire state.

L: No, and that'd be it.

D: To kind of wrap it up, what were some of the challenges of the first day with orientation and getting all of the students into the high school?

L: Well, that was my deal too. I did the freshman orientation, I wrote the whole thing. Challenges of that... yes, moving people around minute by minute, having something splashy. One of the things that we did for orientation, we wanted something splashy so we had a big deal in the auditorium, you weren't here that year, we had a big deal in the auditorium, and we used some of our technology, we had this huge sized screen with this big video then we brought Mr. Barnekoff on stage being chattered onstage in a Jaguar convertible. That was my deal, this whole little production. So we brought him in, and then, you know escorted by girls in gowns. So we had a splashy show in there. We had to have tours of the building. We had, I mean, it was a scheduling, not a nightmare because it was wonderful, but you're right that one of the huge challenges was the first week of school. Just physically getting a whole new student body in, figuring out who goes where when, we had chosen our student leaders just kind of random by recommendations the previous summer. So, the student leaders were sort-of trained in what was going to go on here but they were new too.

D: How did you train them?

L: We brought them in during the summer and worked with them, did tours, they went to leadership camp. Our first leadership teacher Nancy Haack. Somebody will talk to her,

I'm sure and she'll tell how she tried to take this batch of strangers and make them a leadership team. It was a challenge. Your sister was in the first team of leadership students. I hope you're interviewing her.

D: I'm not actually.

L: Is someone?

D: No.

L: No?

D: There are some students being interviewed but they are mostly students that started as Freshmen and went all the way through.

L: But she was on that leadership team, she did some interesting things.

D: She used to always talk about it but I really didn't care much at the time.

L: Yea, it was stressful. It was very difficult for everyone at every level.

D: Well, thank you very much, this will help out a lot.

L: Ok.