

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Bert Gredvig
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L: Linda
A: Akira

L: ?? interview with Bert Gredvig. The interview is being conducted on May 13th, 1986. The interviewer is Linda Dodds for the High Tech and Washington County History project.

Well I think Dr. Gredvig, I'd like to start by asking you how you became involved in high tech.

B: Good morning Linda. I first need to correct you, I'm not a doctor.

L: Okay. All right.

B: But I'm formerly with Tektronix. I was with Tektronix's for nearly 23 years in facilities management roles most of that time with Tek. In that capacity was very much involved in Tek's building expansion program and its land acquisition programs around the State as well in support of the field offices nationally with some international involvement as well. I've been at the Graduate Center actually to work for OGC Science Park Inc. as a Vice-President. I've been here with Dr. Carlson since November of 1983.

My involvement in the high tech is really from the land and facilities point of view I would guess and thinking of Washington County having been very much involved with tech during its high growth years in the '60s and '70s. At one point during a time I was Corporate Facilities Manager tech more than doubled its space in a period of less than five years. And obviously when you expand that rapidly you also add a lot of jobs and a lot of people in that process.

The Tek began to recognize that its size was a concern to Tek management size and one governmental entity, mainly Washington County and began looking for ways to disperse that growth into other communities so as not to be too dominant an influence in one area. And I guess internally we sort of likened ourselves as not wanting to become the Boeing as that is the Boeing of Seattle, the Tek of Washington Country sort of phenomena. There were times during that exploring other opportunities of where to locate that we explored sites all around the State and settling at the time on a site some 18 to 20 miles away from Beaverton and Wilsonville which was the first large expansion site for Tek away from Beaverton. That process was involved in getting a site ready for development which meant pursuing through site developments and land use actions with the City of Wilsonville and to its ultimate building approvals and such in that community.

Following sites in subsequent years was the court county site in near Vancouver, Washington. A similar process, a site acquisition pursuing necessary land use approvals, development approvals with Clark County to ultimate building development and acquired another site in Lebanon, Oregon which has not been used and another site in Redmond, Oregon which I believe right now is undergoing that development process.

Sort of so much for land development kind of issues...

L: Can I interrupt here a minute. I want to ask was there any kind of feeling at all that perhaps the land in Washington County, the available land had been exhausted for development in high tech or was it an entirely different ?

B: Well as this process develop evolved with Tektronix's growth there were other entities, both start-up companies and other companies moving to the area. During the initial states of Tek's growth as we know them today, the Oregon's Land Use Planning laws were sort of in the embryonic stage and being evolving and being developed. And specifically in Washington County there were areas where the Comprehensive Land Use Plan had not yet been fully developed and approved by State level agencies, namely LCDC. Through that process, Tek participated and was, I think a favorable influence in helping to gel the initial concepts of the plan. That plan has been reviewed often and there have been some changes made to the plan to accommodate for the very rapid expansion that is occurring in the Sunset corridor area of Washington County and in Hillsboro.

I think the City's plans as well have gelled to the point and have gone through some iterations of change, probably more dramatic than Hillsboro than in Beaverton although Beaverton has grown rather dramatically in size as well. That is its urban boundaries. Tek's attitude was very much of wanting to work with the system and not try to dominate. But it's attitude I think largely influenced by Howard Vollum was to not totally direct what was happening be rather a member of the community and let the community as a group, decide what's best for that community, not to in any way permit Tek to dictate what it felt was best for that community. And I think that attitude has always been a very healthy one and continues to exist today even though Howard is no longer providing that guidance.

The added growth stimulated I think in large part by Tek spawned the need for the institution which is now called The Oregon Graduate Center for Study and Research. There was a Governor's Commission appointed by the then Governor Mark Hatfield which pursued the notion of the need for an institution, a graduate institution for the technical and engineering type personnel that Tek was needing to both attract and hire and to retain. And the management of Tektronix recognized that in the ? metro area that that there was a real need for a higher level or a graduate education. And that's how the Graduate Center was originally formed and funded in large part by business leaders including Tektronix at that time. The first physical presence of the Graduate Center was kind of a joint effort, I think led by Tektronix and in the person of Bill Webber, then a Vice-President of Administration I think his title was, for Tek who also was very active in Tektronix Foundation and I think still is today.

Martin Marietta had a facility on Barnes Road which was adjacent to the Tektronix's Sunset plant that they had made a decision, (they Martin Marietta) had made a decision to relocate the activities from that facility to a different part of the country which made that land and that building surplus to their needs. Tek was instrumental in getting them to sell the property at a very nominal price and assist in sort of a joint donation of part of its value with Tektronix Foundation providing the balance of that value by buying it from Martin Marietta and then in turn donating to the Oregon Graduate Center to get its initial start with the facility.

I was fortunate to have been involved in helping to implement that process and also in a role of Facilities Manager to help the Graduate Center get started initially in sort of getting the building converted to office classroom lab kinds of adaptations. And all the time from then on, in my role

in Tektronix's I was also providing, where appropriate, advice and suggestions and help to the Graduate Center as it evolved over the years.

After it's initial start in it's location on Barnes Road, Tektronix's Foundation had acquired some 70 plus acres which was known as the Donovan Farm at about 196th and Walker Road for the ultimate intent of a more permanent home for a graduate school. Some years later that actual donation to the school and the construction of the first building on the Walker Road site became a reality. I don't recall just what year that was but it had to have been the mid to late '60s I would guess.

L: What was the area like on Walker Road at the Donovan Farm, I mean the surrounding area at that point?

B: The area was very much rural in nature. Mostly I guess it would classify it as gentlemen farms - five acres on up - some as large as 70 to 100 acres. Most of those parcels having been in family-held ownerships for a number of years. Walker Road as it still is today is just a two lane, as is described by County governments sort of a farm-to-market in its origins; not really designed to handle the kind of growth that has occurred in this part of Washington County in the Sunset Corridor.

The Oregon Primate Center was a neighbor to the Oregon Graduate Center and the role that the Tek Foundation played in that location, I think there was an involvement but I'm really quite sure just how. Dr. Pennington who was also active in the Tektronix's Foundation was knowledgeable and somewhat involved in the establishment of the early primate center as I recall.

Sometime later, there was a development at the intersection of 185th and Walker Road called the Abel Book Company which its mission or its purpose and by the way the way that property sort of bordered the Primate Center property on one corner and was very close to the Graduate Center property on Walker Road. I think Richard Abel was the founder of that and its mission was to write and publish text books. Some time later that company for some reason became financially insolvent. The property was taken over by US National Bank and Tektronix's was able to do a property exchange with the US Bank exchanging its Sunset plant property for the Abel Book property on Walker Road and establishing then the Tektronix's through expansion programs and conversion of the existing building establish the Walker Road site for Tektronix.

L: I didn't realize how that came about.

B: Right. I was involved in that exchange, representing Tek with the bank.

L: Was that an even exchange?

B: It wasn't exactly even. There were... values were determined and there was some 38 acres of land in the Abel book property. Some, my memory fails me but I think there was something like 11 or so acres of land that the Sunset Highway plant corresponding values because of the Sunset highway frontage and more actual building square footage at the Sunset plant. I think there were values arrived at and I'd have to think on just how that exchange took place. I can't remember how the values worked out but Tek immediately embarked on expansion of the conversion of the existing building and expansion of that site to its present size which it has an expanded single building plus a I think around a 200,000 square foot two level second building plus a cafeteria building on that side. There is a room for an additional building at that site.

The bank almost in a simultaneous action sold that Sunset property to a developer venture I believe who converted the buildings, the existing Tektronix buildings, former Tek buildings and built a second building on that site which is what we see there today.

L: The 1980's about the time that Sunset Corridor was getting organized. Was there any awareness on the part of Tektronix that it would be getting into the Corridor area?

B: Well certainly some awareness. I having been in that role at that time with Tektronix and although we didn't take an active role in formation of Sunset Corridor we certainly kept ourselves informed. But sort of prior to the formation of Sunset Corridor Association there was a lot of activity in the evolving of what was called the Sunset West Community Plan which was a revisiting of to the land use designations in the area of part of which what property Tek owned as well as most of the land from about 158th to 185th which needed to be revisited and some designation changed. And it changed in that so-called study area in 19?? Sunset West Community Plan I think it was called. Tek participated in that process and the Sunset Corridor and its landowner members did also. Then the Sunset Corridor Association began to develop by expanding roadways and infrastructure systems, sewer systems and the like or tried to influence that development. The large landowners were of course Standard insurance, the Quadrant Corporation as key players and I think the Wachovia Trust which is being managed, that is the site is being managed by Lansing Properties at 158th and Sunset Highway. There were other smaller landowners involved as well but those were the principal ones.

Oregon Graduate Center was and is very much a catalyst to the development concepts of the Sunset Corridor. Again, companies recognizing the value of having a quality institution of higher education involved in research as a part of or accessible to development in the area. I think even some of the Sunset Corridor members refer to the Graduate Center in their advertising brochures indicating the level of importance they place on the Graduate School.

About the same time that Sunset Corridor formation and a lot of activity was occurring in this community, Dr. Carlson was named President of OGC and with a mission of finding a way to fund the growth as well as the ongoing programs at the school. Dr. Carlson's notion was to emulate what had happened in Stanford or ? Alto with Stanford. That is, using lands that were available to develop a science park that would surround the school and provide for long term income to provide that source of funding for programs and the growth of the Graduate Center.

In my role at Tek, I was likened, my participation at that time was sort of a cheerleader and Dr. Carlson and I talked often about the concept. I provided suggestions, advice, generally moral support for the concept thinking that it was very much having been around the country a number of places and having seen what other parts of the country had done. And in that regard felt it very much was both timely and a good idea for the Center and for the community, larger communities Sunset Corridor area. Again I likened my role as sort of a cheerleader to that process working for Tektronix providing some moral support and advice where appropriate to Paul.

Some years later I took advantage of the early retirement offer at Tektronix and Dr. Carlson found out about that, asked me to join the team (chuckles) which I was very pleased to do. So I went from cheerleader to team player in the Graduate Center concept of the Science Park concept. The role of the Science Park I think fits in very well with the growth of high tech in Oregon or Washington County. The role of research and opportunities in the area to take advantage for employees of companies in the area to take advantage of higher education

programs at the school is certainly carrying out the vision of people like Mark Hatfield and Howard Vollum and others had back in 1963 which was the formation of the Graduate Center. Those goals are being realized on even a broader scale today in my opinion.

The narrow focus that our Science Park has of trying to attract only companies who are very involved in research and development, engineering, in prototype development stages and not wanting to accommodate manufacturing or assembly functions only in the Science Park I think is going to perpetuate that idea of the nucleus of the sort of being the scientific village if you will for the Corridor. It's fun to be a part of the process and certainly Dr. Carlson is a very dynamic leader. Not only locally but nationally, if not internationally he's a recognized leader in those areas. And I think that's the fun part for me as a non-academic person to be involved with some of the very exciting things and some of the recognized world leaders in the particular disciplines of research that are going on at the school.

L: I should think that would be very satisfying. I have one question that occurred to me. I'm interested in high tech architecture among other things and perhaps in your experiences with tech and with the Graduate Center you might be able comment on that.

B: Yeah that's interesting. I had not really thought about it as high tech architecture but I think that all the companies with Tektronix and its counterpart Hewlett Packard sort of I think setting the pace, in early years of being very employee-conscious. That is having a high regard for the comfort, the well-being, not in a socialistic sense, but really having a concern, a deep-seated I think concern for its employees. That obviously carried into the development of campus-type facilities such as Tektronix Beaverton campus with lots of landscaping, lots of open areas accessible to the employees. And Tek has often been described as Oregon's prettiest campus even more so or setting or taking the lead above some of the universities in the State.

But I think the architecture reflects that as well in that the attitude certainly espoused by Howard and Jack Murdock, the founders of Tek of wanting to make the workplace a very pleasant environment for people to work in – providing break areas, providing easily accessible cafeterias, accommodating staggered shifts to allow people to come more at their convenience having a side effect of not impacting the traffic patterns in the local area as well. By staggering the work shifts they don't all come and leave at certain hours thereby overloading or causing overloads in surrounding streets.

But the attitude and this where one of my roles at Tektronix and certainly one that I'll treasure is the direct involvement that I had with Howard in sort of understanding and knowing his attitudes both towards employees and how that should be transmitted in how buildings get designed. Always wanting windows placed so that the visual, the ability to see outside was available to all employees, not just say management by having offices along window walls and those kind of things as you see in many companies. Windows such as the floor-to-ceiling types so that even internal to large buildings you could look across the area and see outside, see what was happening.

Again carrying that theme outside with very pleasant landscape treatments, break areas providing the picnic tables so people could go outside and enjoy Oregon's climate when it allows us to do that. Little things – bicycle racks, encouraging people to use alternate methods of transportation to come to work. Howard always had the philosophy that concepts and zoning which were prevalent at that time, that is in the early '60s had industry on one side of town and residents and commercial in different areas. He never agreed with that. His attitude was you

need to mix those things so people can easily live near where they work and use bicycles, walk to work, those kinds of things.

Numerous times I had conversations with Howard about his notion and his thought on land use planning and I think we've seen that evolve, that is his concepts in a more prevalent way. And I think that I see that clearly demonstrated in the mix of zoning that we now see in the Sunset Corridor area where we have some light industrial, we have institutional, we have office commercial, neighborhood commercial. But also lots of residential zoning intermingled with these zones so that there won't be the sort of notion of industry on the one side of town and residences on the other. I think that Howard was certainly ahead of his time and ? he was in so many ways in setting the pace for architectural design, concerned for employees in that design and development and also in the community designs and establishment of a very comfortable environment for everyone. That of course carried over with Howard's beliefs of how pay and incentive packages and employee participation through profit-sharing. You know it was a full notion of recognizing the value of employees to the overall success of the company which by the way was also a trend setter in those early years in the electronics or high tech communities that is profit-sharing notions and the like.

L: What would be the architectural attitude, let us say with the Oregon Graduate Center?

B: Well again Howard had a strong influence being both personally and through Tektronix's Foundation. being a supporter of the school in financial ways was also influenced the design of the architecture of the school. And as you can see the use of materials that are sort of warm and friendly, heavy use of wood principally cedar and redwood in some of the exterior finishes of the school. Again the campus atmosphere of nice landscaping, internal surroundings that are sort of friendly in terms of choice of materials as well as color schemes and such.

We've tried to as economics will permit us to do, we've tried to carry that sort of feeling into the Science Park. We've gone to more than one level whereas most of the buildings in the school are principally one level. We have the ability of adding second levels but in the Science Park we've gone to two and three level structures trying to make them friendly as well as economically viable for generating revenues as well. There's no question that Howard's presence and early direction has set the pace for a lot of development in the high tech community.

L: There seems to be an emphasis on the horizontal in high tech. I've noticed in most of the buildings that I've seen particularly in the newer ones built since 1980 there is this great emphasis on the horizontal lines. Is there any explanation for that?

B: Lines and such, yeah. Well architecture tends to be a little trendy and I think that happens to be very popular. I think functionally if you look at there's an extensive use of glass. Oregon has a lot of very pretty views with trees and such and changing skylines. It isn't always gray and cloudy. And I think it's an attempt to allow employees to take advantage of those pretty views by extensive use of glass.

Oregon is an interesting study in another way in that there's a preponderance of builders, developers, architects who stress energy conservation in their designs - placement of the buildings, use of materials not just to meet codes but to go beyond. I think that's one of the things that I enjoy about the attitudes that I think are present in Oregon toward conservation and preservation of the environment. An example I think is the adoption of our fairly stringent land use laws that we have within Oregon and of bottle bills and you know that sort of environmental,

a statement of environmental attitude. And I think that's one of the things that attract high tech people to the area. I think that's something that we all share.

L: So you see that as a benefit rather than a hindrance.

B: Absolutely. No question about the need for land use planning and to preserve the balance of development. That balances farm land as well as residential balance and a balance of commercial and industrial and institutional kinds of uses.

L: Have you seen any kind of attitude change or maybe it's just always been the same of the Washington County planning agencies?

B: Change in a loosening of their attitudes or that sort of thing?

L: Well I'm hesitant to suggest one thing or another to you but how have you found...

B: Well I think that the present regime if you will in Washington County has been extremely cooperative and have an attitude of how can we help versus this is the way it's going to be attitude. And I think that in turn prompts an attitude of cooperation on the part of builders, developers and landowners. No one likes to be told that this is the way it is and there shall be no other. I think if you – which is what I see happening, certainly in the Sunset Corridor is an attitude of how can we work together recognizing that we all have much to gain and we all can benefit from cooperative problem solving in terms of traffic which is obviously one of the big concerns right now in Washington County. Has been for some time but I don't see a loosening of, really in any way of enforcement attitudes but rather an attitude of, on the part of landowner developers wanting to work within the system and an attitude on the part of the government bodies of wanting to help that cooperative attitude in a sort of 'we all win' kind of attitude if we work together. There are exceptions to that. There are some developers who I believe have a 'me first' or 'me only' attitude and sort of to heck with the next guy. And we'll always find that I think. But by and large I think that which is certainly driving our development is the high regard for impacts and impacts on the community and corresponding advantages.

And I have been very fortunate to have met with and worked with many of our neighbors. And I find that everyone has a point of view but if they're allowed to express that point of view and they understand what your mission is, you don't find a lot of this hostile opposition if you are openly sharing and demonstrate that you're willing to listen to other people's concerns. And more than listen, recognize those things and deal with them in road designs and building setbacks and a number of those issues.

But not only Washington County but I think that the City of Beaverton, City of Hillsboro are very much supportive of quality development. And I think that's one of the reasons this area of the State, it's just one of the many reasons but it is one of the reasons that development has been occurring here as rapidly as it has. Companies don't want to go where there's an attitude, even a perception of an attitude that we're not wanted. If obstacles or hurdles are imagined or real to them pursuing their developments they'll go some place else. Often stated, the reason by Tektronix, by me on behalf of Tektronix that we don't want to go a community where we're not wanted. That's one of the checkpoints that companies go through is governmental attitudes – what is their attitude towards business - would we be welcome. There are just too many other places companies can go if they sense they are not welcome.

L: I'm curious about the actual construction of a high tech facility. If you were going to, if you had in mind to construct a high tech building development, how long from the time you put it on paper till the time you open the door – how long, well let's say till you broke ground – how long would that planning process be?

B: Sort of the gestation period for it, yeah. Well it depends on the size of the facility and the complexity of the facility but in using my frame of reference as at Tektronix, if we were searching for and trying to find a large raw site....again using the Tektronix frame of reference on the question how long does it take to develop a site, starting from sort of raw land as I would describe it, you really need to allow a minimum of two years. And it can be longer but that process allows you to do your master site plan which can be concurrent with your initial building design. Then there are numerous approving or government designer review process. The permitting, that is submitting of actual building plans for permits and then the construction cycle itself. The construction cycle typically takes 9 to 12 months. So you can see even in a two year cycle there isn't much time to go through the various approval stages and the design stages. Typically it takes longer than that.

If you move on to a site that is essentially ready for construction, that is streets and sewerages and water and everything are available then you're really looking at a design construct time of something in the order of 12 to 18 months.

L: Are those facilities available at the Science Park here?

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B: Yes. We've got 147 acres that has all been master planned. We now have about 90% of our streets and underground utilities in place. So we have a number of building sites that we can design and have a building up in the 9 month timeframe without too much problem. Again we've established a very good working relationship with the review and approval bodies in the county. And not that we get any preferential treatment it's just that they know by previous experience with us they know what to expect from us and can work in a more cooperative fashion. I think that says a lot for, again building those bridges of cooperation and responsibility. If we were a stranger to that process I think they would be more cautious and more rigorous in their reviews. Not at all to imply that we get by with anything it's just that they know what our standards are and can be more comfortable in dealing with that.

In terms of available sites we don't sell land. We wanted to do the developing and lease land and space to users. There's probably a lack of large sites available in the Corridor. I say probably because there's some effort to try to expand the urban growth boundary and I think in the specific instances that are being reviewed I think it has merit, again to balance and sort of fill out the plan. Not to deviate from it but really to sort of finalize the plan for the area. I think it's difficult to envision when you do a plan early on just how development is going to occur. Now that we have some history with that I think some of the changes in the human growth boundary, at the ones I know about that are being suggested in this area makes sense. And I don't think are at all deviating from the overall intent of land use planning in the area. It's sort of filling in some voids and moving lines to some logical existing barriers, roads, power lines, those kinds of things.

So I think that development in the Corridor in terms of large site users is going to be somewhat limited over the next few years. There aren't many 100 acre sites remaining in the Corridor and I think that's okay. I think that we've got a number of those and Tektronix large campuses, Intel,

Fujitsu, NEC, Epsom to a smaller degree but now that there's opportunity for a lot of smaller development to take place that will probably suggest that large site users will need to move to other available sites and there are some around this State. So I think it's, I see sort of a realization in real terms, in real development terms of fulfilling the intent of land use planning - again providing a balance around various communities and around the State.

L: I think this answers all of my questions but I usually around the end of my interviews I ask my interviewees if there's anything they would like to add.

B: One thought occurs to me is that sort of the mission of your interview is the high tech development. Because of my role at Tek and met and continue to have acquaintances and in fact good friends who have similar roles for other companies around the world. And because of those acquaintances I am frequently contacted by people in companies like National Center ??, Hewlett Packard, DuPont, just a number of companies around the world. I kind of cherish that role but I think in some modest way I've helped in the development of the sort of high tech community in Oregon and certainly in the immediate area of the Sunset Corridor and such and I hope to continue in that. And I think that's a fairly close knit fraternity that once you're involved with and if you have credibility people tend to go to individuals they know and not totally rely on government or public entities for information. So I think in some small way I not only feel good about having been a native in this area for a lot of years and seen the area grow and mature but also feel that I sort of helped in making it happen and being a little bit able to guide how things have gone. And that's a fulfilling kind of feeling.

L: I haven't thought but it must, as you say, it must be usual for a native - well I don't know if you were born in the area but you have lived here for quite awhile to be active in high tech when most of these people come from outside the area.

B: Yeah, it's been a real as I said a very fulfilling career for me and career's not over. I just changed career a few years ago. But I still been very active in the local scene, church activities but also Sunset Corridor Association and the ? Valley Development Association or Corporation, community development of a number of kinds. I was active in the YMCA campaign recently.

L: Are other people in high tech interested in these cultural aspects of the community?

B: I think very much so. And I think that each sort of pursues their particular area of interest. But I think you'll find an awful lot of them interested in education and some of the cultural kinds of things whether it be Portland symphony. There's a number of high tech people involved on college boards of trustees. I think the Oregon Graduate Center Board is a good example of that. Pacific University. People like Doug Strain from ESI; retired Les Stevens from Tektronics; Casey Powell from Asequent? and the Metro Graphics people?, the list just goes on. They tend to be very involved people. They're not myopic in their view, that is thinking of only their company and its success. They are very aware of the community and the area around them and tend to be very active. They're not pacifists in that sense. They're willing to invest their own time and their own money to sort of ensure the quality of life issues that are important to high tech companies. I think that's very positive attitudes, the positive qualities of having the high tech development or the so-called Silicon Forest that we've now become known as.

But you know again, the Graduate Center's concept is to be involved in that development but on a broader scale. Research at the school is more than just in the electronics field. It's in the biochemistry and areas that are very important to Oregon's base industry, namely forest products. The Center's done a lot of things in those areas and it's funded by some of the forest

product companies in the State. So I think that when people say that the high tech development is largely electronics and we need a mix, I agree with that. I think we do but I think that's coming. I think that Tektronix's influence and Floating Point and Intel has put heavy slant towards electronics and that high tech but we're getting a balance. I think the pendulum always returns, that is it swings the other way too.

L: Well thank you very much. I've appreciated it.

B: Thank you. I've enjoyed it.

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