

1057 Interviewer: Linda Stiles Taylor (LT)

1058 Interviewee: Ruth Loomis (RL)

1059  
1060 LT: Can we just start with when and where were you born? Were you born here in Forest  
1061 Grove?

1062  
1063 RL: No, I came here when I was 5 years old.

1064  
1065 LT: From where?

1066  
1067 RL: Holly, Minnesota.

1068  
1069 LT: So, you've been here since you were five. And what year were you born?

1070  
1071 RL: 1903.

1072  
1073 LT: Which makes you 97 this year?

1074  
1075 RL: Yes.

1076  
1077 LT: ...And in wonderful shape, it's great. Now, I understand you have many recollections from  
1078 the early days of the library, including visiting with Mrs. Rogers, the original donor of the  
1079 building to the City of Forest Grove. You want to share some of your earliest memories?

1080  
1081 RL: Of the house. Mrs. Rogers came to Forest Grove, course I wouldn't know when, she lived,  
1082 we lived on the same street, which is now Elm, that she lived on, and I loved it, I remember the  
1083 house very well, and I only went with my mother, I think. She was a very pleasant, small  
1084 woman. The house sat quite a ways back from the street, and from the sidewalk you took four or  
1085 five steps to the walkway up to the house and then at the house, I think, there were more steps to  
1086 get into it. We rang the bell and the maid came, and we were ushered into a sitting room on the  
1087 right hand side of the hallway.

1088  
1089 LT: Was that the red room? Or... They were famous for having a red room with a plaque...

1090  
1091 RL: This was their living room.

1092  
1093 LT: Oh, okay.

1094  
1095 RL: Of course, I didn't do any visiting. My mother did, and I don't remember if we were served  
1096 afternoon tea or not. I wouldn't be surprised, but I think because this was characteristic of my  
1097 mother's home. But anyway, we had a visit without me saying anything, and then left. But the  
1098 house itself was interesting to look at from a distance. It was two stories, had a good many  
1099 windows, which were long, narrow windows, as I recall, and after she died it was purchased and  
1100 demolished and a gentleman here in Forest Grove had enough wood to make two more houses,  
1101 and so the house never burned or anything of that sort. Afterwards, the park there was beautiful

1102 and they had all sorts of wildflowers, trilliums and such like that we would enjoy walking as we  
1103 went to school or went down to some neighbors.

1104  
1105 LT: There was a gentleman who tended the yard there for many years. Did you know him?

1106  
1107 RL: Who?

1108  
1109 LT: The gentleman who took care of the yard for many years, just as a community service?

1110  
1111 RL: I don't remember his name. No I don't think I would have been interested as a kid, because  
1112 I was only about 12 when I had visited with her.

1113  
1114 LT: Do you remember when it was empty? In the local records they say the children all  
1115 thought it was a haunted house after Mrs. Rogers had moved away and it was sort of, had fallen  
1116 into disrepair before they tore it down.

1117  
1118 RL: That could have been, that could have been.

1119  
1120 LT: Do you remember those, ever hearing that when you were a child?

1121  
1122 RL: No, no. Aren't too many other interests. We lived on the same street but I didn't go past it  
1123 on my way to school, so I don't know.

1124  
1125 LT: And it was where Rogers Park is today, right?

1126  
1127 RL: What?

1128  
1129 LT: The home is where Rogers Park is today. Mrs. Rogers former home was in what is today  
1130 Rogers Park.

1131  
1132 RL: Well, I suppose. Well I think what you wanted was the library.

1133  
1134 LT: I do.

1135  
1136 RL: And, the library I do remember was on the corner of what is now 21<sup>st</sup> and College Way.  
1137 One story, white, with very prominent, big windows on the front and I think there were some  
1138 windows on the east side. It was divided I think in two parts with a reading room with tables and  
1139 chairs, and I think The Oregonian was prominent there every day, and then they had the library  
1140 shelves. And in the corner of the back room was a rest room for mothers and children, and that  
1141 would be the only restroom, toilet facilities, downtown. And it was people who came in from  
1142 Clapshaw Hill, and Dilley and other places, and they were really grateful that they had that  
1143 facility.

1144  
1145 LT: And it was the only thing like it around, there was no other public place to go.

1146

1147 RL: No, no. And the books of course, we were all taking books out and I think they had a large  
1148 number of magazines. Some of the librarians, I suppose you've got the whole list of them.  
1149  
1150 LT: Did you know Mrs. Sanford, who was the one who would have been in your childhood.  
1151  
1152 RL: Yes, yes. And there was Reverend Holmes who had been the minister of the Congregational  
1153 church and retired here for a few years, and Mrs. White who had been prominent in Forest Grove  
1154 and at one time owned where Patterson's Gift Shop is now. People who were in retirement, and  
1155 I suppose they were paid a very small salary and how it was supported financially I don't know.  
1156  
1157 LT: Well, I know the city passed its first tax in 1907. They levied a tax for the library, but it  
1158 was very small, but Mrs. Rogers bequest also funded books. Do you remember going to the  
1159 library as a child and checking books out yourself?  
1160  
1161 RL: Not very many because we had a lot, we had magazines and books coming in at the house.  
1162 Yes I did get some.  
1163  
1164 LT: How many were you allowed to check out at a time, do you remember?  
1165  
1166 RL: I have no idea.  
1167  
1168 RL: Do you remember if they charged fines, or...  
1169  
1170 LT: No, I think my mother would see I got things back on time.  
1171  
1172 RL: Today we don't charge fines, but I wondered if you remembered how they did that. And  
1173 they had a wood stove there too, right, to keep warm. Do you remember the wood stove...?  
1174  
1175 LT: Who?  
1176  
1177 RL: They had a wood stove in the library.  
1178  
1179 LT: Oh yes, for heat, oh yes. That was what we had in the grade school that I attended. They  
1180 had these great big monsters in the back of the room that was fed by wood.  
1181  
1182 RL: What school was that?  
1183  
1184 LT: Central school.  
1185  
1186 RL: So that was normal to have a big wood stove everywhere...  
1187  
1188 RL: And lots of great big stacks of wood on the outside. Over at Pacific University they'd have  
1189 stacks of wood the full length of Marsh Hall to use for heat in Marsh Hall.  
1190  
1191 LT: And then do you recall when the library burned, when there was the fire in 1919?

1193 RL: I wasn't here, we were out on a picnic and when we came back we found fire demolished  
1194 several buildings. I think the building that was right next to the library was a woman's hat shop  
1195 and I think right next to that building, there may have been a different order, was the man who  
1196 made bows, bows and arrows. Now what was his name?, his daughter was Marsh, anyway he  
1197 was famous all over the United States for his bows, and he went up Mt. Hood about every other  
1198 year to get the wood and bring it back and let it season. And bows and arrows was something, it  
1199 was one of the sports people enjoyed, like croquet.

1200  
1201 LT: And so when the fire occurred, was that...I would imagine it was tremendously traumatic  
1202 for the whole town.

1203  
1204 RL: Oh, well that's right. It happened a couple times that we had fires like that.

1205  
1206 LT: So do you remember what afterwards, or how people came together to rebuild or...

1207  
1208 RL: No. Well, I think about that time, I was probably about 12, I think, and I don't think I was...  
1209 My mother was very active in the town with anything that needed help. Both my parents were  
1210 born in England and came over, so I'm first generation, but I've always been interested in Forest  
1211 Grove and read the News-Times diligently for what goes on.

1212  
1213 LT: And so when they rebuilt the library in the same location...

1214  
1215 RL: Yes, because they had the land.

1216  
1217 LT: And do you remember... I guess the United Church of Christ was rebuilt.

1218  
1219 RL: That's right.

1220  
1221 LT: Was it a long, long time in your childhood memory that there was no downtown so to speak,  
1222 or did it seem it was pretty quickly that they rebuilt it?

1223  
1224 RL: Well, yes, I think people, if something burned why something was rebuilt or adjusted right  
1225 away because when we had that fire in, what is the main street coming in from Portland.....

1226  
1227 LT: Pacific Avenue, or?

1228  
1229 RL: Well where Fry's store is.

1230  
1231 LT: Pacific Avenue.

1232  
1233 RL: Yes, well in the middle of that there is a large parking lot, and that was a whole series of  
1234 buildings. One was a bakery and one was a barber shop and those weren't rebuilt. And of  
1235 course, Fry's at the time was Hoffman's General Merchandise, and he still has that pull where  
1236 you can pay downstairs and it can go up to the balcony.

1237  
1238 LT: Huh.

1239 RL: They're very unique. Haven't you seen it?  
1240  
1241 LT: No, I haven't. I have to check for it the next time I go in there and see, and take a look.  
1242  
1243 RL: They're very, very good about things like that.  
1244  
1245 LT: Just preserving historical detail.  
1246  
1247 RL: And the library is wonderful where it is now, and all the facilities it has. Again, it has all  
1248 these facilities for, the toilets, and good facilities for people that are just going by needing  
1249 something like that. They can stop in. I don't know that Portland library has all those. It's first  
1250 class, but....  
1251  
1252 LT: The last library in its current location was placed there in 1978 with an LSCA grant and that  
1253 was when it moved to its current location on Pacific.  
1254  
1255 RL: I think one of the biggest advantages we have now is, you call it Metro, because what book  
1256 we want if it isn't here it comes from some other city.  
1257  
1258 LT: Oh, are you thinking of Washington County Cooperative Library Services, WCCLS, that --  
1259  
1260 RL: Yes, it can come out of Beaverton or several other places here so--  
1261  
1262 LT: ...So we all share the resources.  
1263  
1264 RL: We don't have to send to Salem.  
1265  
1266 LT: Right, so we all cooperate with one another, and....  
1267  
1268 RL: Yes. I don't know. Now they have books for the Spanish-speaking, and of course the  
1269 children's section I've always thought was simply wonderful. I've gone in there ever so many  
1270 times for grandchildren.  
1271  
1272 LT: I guess the first children's alcove was built in 1941, so by then you would have been an  
1273 adult. Do you remember the children's alcove in the old library?  
1274  
1275 RL: No.  
1276  
1277 LT: You became a teacher when you grew up right? Is that correct, that you were a teacher?  
1278  
1279 RL: In '41?  
1280  
1281 LT: No, did you become a teacher when you were an adult?  
1282  
1283 RL: Yes. I got my B.A and taught in Forest Grove for two years, then I taught at Pacific for the  
1284 rest of the time.

1285 LT: What did you teach in Forest Grove for two years? What grade level?  
1286  
1287 RL: At the high school.  
1288  
1289 LT: At the high school? What subject?  
1290  
1291 RL: Oh I think it was some biology. My major was physical education, and that's what we did.  
1292 We started over at Pacific was a major course. The coach that was hired was, the first ones I  
1293 worked with didn't have any physical ed background, but they were a coach. And so when we  
1294 put in a major department, I had some of those subjects that came to me and then I went out and  
1295 got a master's degree at Columbia. But isn't that something to be teaching at a university with a  
1296 B.A.?  
1297  
1298 LT: Yeah, those were the days.  
1299  
1300 RL: Well, we had AAUW, do you know that?  
1301  
1302 LT: Um-hmm.  
1303  
1304 RL: Well, the national president was from my university which was Mills College in Oakland,  
1305 and she was the national president and she came up here and she went to the, I suppose to the  
1306 president, anyway she interviewed to see how many women were on the staff, and when there  
1307 weren't very many, she really took them to task and they did hire more women. And of course  
1308 they have lots more women now than men I think on the staff. Maybe not in the specialties, not  
1309 in the optometry or their advanced courses there.  
1310  
1311 LT: You probably know Dr. Peg Gilbert, then -- Margaret Gilbert that worked in the optometry  
1312 clinic. What year did you retire from Pacific?  
1313  
1314 RL: When did I retire?  
1315  
1316 LT: Uh-huh.  
1317  
1318 RL: Oh, let's see. About 1940, I think.  
1319  
1320 LT: So, I guess she would have come after....  
1321  
1322 RL: I had married and we had two children, a boy and a girl, after I was 40.  
1323  
1324 LT: That was unusual in those days.  
1325  
1326 RL: Yes, yes, not anymore. No, that's right. And my husband had had typhoid fever as a child,  
1327 so he had a heart condition and so he died quite early. We were only married about 30 years, so  
1328 it was after that that I began my volunteer work.  
1329  
130 LT: So are your children still here locally?

1331  
1332 RL: No, my daughter is back in New Jersey and my son is down in San Jose.  
1333  
1334 LT: Ah. But you've spent most of your life here, then...  
1335  
1336 RL: I have.  
1337  
1338 LT: ...Except for Mills College in Oakland and five years...  
1339  
1340 RL: That's right. We did a lot of traveling. My husband liked to travel. And of course with  
1341 both my parents coming from England, we were in England many times. The first time I was in  
1342 England, I went by boat with my father and that took about 10 days and it was pretty rough.  
1343  
1344 LT: So do you recall when you were a child, do you remember going to libraries in England at  
1345 all. Or did you enjoy reading enough that you would look at libraries when you would travel?  
1346 Or would just bring a book along and....  
1347  
1348 RL: Well, when we took the children, we took them for three months and we had a car in Europe  
1349 and I each night did a bit of wash and laundry and my son helped Joe decide what next day's trip  
1350 would be and Janet wrote the diary, so we were all busy. But, we did quite a few bed and  
1351 breakfasts as we went along.  
1352  
1353 LT: Now we have one right down here on Thatcher Road.  
1354  
1355 RL: That's right, that's right.  
1356  
1357 LT: It was such an unusual thing a few years ago, except when you went to Europe and now it's  
1358 come over and is popular.  
1359  
1360 RL: I wonder how many people they can serve?  
1361  
1362 LT: They have three bedrooms that can hold two people each.  
1363  
1364 RL: The Loomis house down there has been a bed and breakfast and....  
1365  
1366 LT: Oh, you mean your original home?  
1367  
1368 RL: That was my husband's home.  
1369  
1370 LT: Oh, okay.  
1371  
1372 RL: On Main Street. Isn't it Main? Yeah. And she had facilities upstairs, so I had my son and  
1373 his family one morning for breakfast over there and my daughter and her family for breakfast  
1374 another time there, so then they had a tour of my husband's home.  
1375  
1376 LT: So was he raised here also?

1377 RL: Yes, he came to Forest Grove, I think, when he was under 10, so.... The family, his sister  
1378 Mamie just died two years ago at 103, so he's the only one who really died young but that was  
1379 because of typhoid fever.  
1380  
1381 LT: So what was your maiden name?  
1382  
1383 RL: Burlingham  
1384  
1385 LT: Oh, okay, okay.  
1386  
1387 RL: Well, they started what turned out to be a very big international business in this other town.  
1388  
1389 LT: So, is Doris your sister-in-law?  
1390  
1391 RL: Yes.  
1392  
1393 LT: Oh, okay. All kinds of everybody's related to everybody if you know their families.  
1394  
1395 RL: In a small town, in a small town.  
1396  
1397 LT: So do you remember any of the books you enjoyed reading as a child, any particular authors  
1398 or titles that were favorites of yours.  
1399  
1400 RL: I remember particularly the St. Nicholas magazine and the Youth Companion...  
1401  
1402 LT: Did you subscribe to those?  
1403  
1404 RL: ...And the Saturday Evening Post and those came regularly and we devoured them. And I  
1405 was always more interested in activities than so much in reading.  
1406  
1407 LT: How about your children? Do you remember taking your children to the library?  
1408  
1409 RL: No I don't, but I'm sure I did. They were both very, very good students and got  
1410 scholarships. I mean they weren't given any financial help, but Jim did research work. They  
1411 both went to Willamette and Jim did a lot of research work in the summer time which he  
1412 enjoyed, and then he went to Stanford. Janet went on and got her master's and got married and  
1413 had two children. And Jim got married and he has three daughters.  
1414  
1415 LT: Your whole family values education it sounds like.  
1416  
1417 RL: That's right. So, I'm grandmother to five and enjoying it very much. And two of them are  
1418 pregnant.  
1419  
1420 LT: So more grandchildren, or great-grandchildren.  
1421  
1422 RL: That's right, that's right.



1423

1424 LT: That's terrific.

1425

1426 RL: I think that's all.

1427

1428 LT: Okay, thank you very much.