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TAKING THE UNIVERSITY TO THE PEOPLE:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

GEORGE RENDELL

Interview conducted by
Robin Li, PhD
in 2008

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George Rendell
Interviewed by Robin Li, ROHO

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Begin Audio File 1 06-10-2008.mp3

01-00:00:00

Li: So this is Robin Li meeting with George Rendell in Long Beach, California, June 10, 2008. So we'll start with an easy one. When and where were you born?

01-00:00:20

Rendell: Yes. I was born March 11, 1932 in Rialto, California.

01-00:00:27

Li: And where is that?

01-00:00:27

Rendell: It's near San Bernardino. It's in San Bernardino County.

01-00:00:32

Li: Did your family have a background in agriculture or—

01-00:00:35

Rendell: My mother had been raised on farms in Oklahoma but had come to California and was teaching school here when she met my father, who was working for a cement plant.

01-00:00:50

Li: So why did she come from Oklahoma? Was it part of the—

01-00:00:54

Rendell: Actually, she became a widow in 1918 with the big influenza and came out here to finish school and then met my dad.

01-00:01:07

Li: And was your dad a farmer already? Or he was—

01-00:01:08

Rendell: No, my dad was not a farmer.

01-00:01:11

Li: Not a farmer—oh, at all.

01-00:01:12

Rendell: And never a farmer, although they bought an acre and a half California ranch and so we had animals, orchard, and garden.

01-00:01:22

Li: Oh, Okay. Okay. So you mentioned earlier that you were in 4-H growing up.

01-00:01:28

Rendell:

Yes. Actually, you could join 4-H when you were ten years old in those days. The county 4-H advisor in Riverside County came out to our school in West Riverside when I was in the fourth grade and exactly ten years old. Talked to us about 4-H. Fortunately, one of my classmates, his mother volunteered to be our 4-H leader. So I started with the West Riverside Boys 4-H Club. That's interesting, because in those days in Riverside County, most of the 4-H Clubs were either all boys or all girls.

01-00:02:08

Li:

Oh, really?

01-00:02:09

Rendell:

Several years later, when my sister was old enough to join 4-H, she joined a different 4-H club.

01-00:02:14

Li:

Okay.

01-00:02:15

Rendell:

This kind of reflects the development or evolution of 4-H over the years. They at first started as project groups. There was a common interest either in growing corn or in canning or in something, and that became the 4-H club. Then we—in Riverside County, anyway, we had separate boys clubs and girls clubs that offered several projects. Later, the model, when I became a 4-H advisor in San Bernardino County was to have community based, so they were larger clubs. Offered a number of different projects for both boys and girls.

01-00:02:55

Li:

So what kind of projects did you do with 4-H then, when you were in school?

01-00:02:59

Rendell:

A variety. My main interest was dairy cattle, although the most I ever had was two or three cows. And gardens — the big interest, of course, in 1942, everybody had Victory Gardens.

01-00:03:13

Li:

Right, right.

01-00:03:13

Rendell:

Because that was right in the middle of—right in the middle of World War II. Yes.

01-00:03:18

Li:

So did most of the kids join, or was it unusual that you wanted to sign up or—

01-00:03:23

Rendell:

No, it was a small group. We met in Mrs. Johnson's living room, probably only six or eight of us. As we grew older, a nearby rancher took over the leadership of our club. But it was still a fairly small group of boys.

01-00:03:46

Li: And so was that a good experience for you, then, being part of 4-H?

01-00:03:50

Rendell: It was a very good experience. And interestingly, again, this reflects on how different Agricultural Extension was. Of course, we weren't very far from the City of Riverside and the county seat, at least the western office of the County Extension office was, and most of the advisors. But later on in high school, a fellow by the name of Don Addis was the 4-H Advisor. He actually came to our club, helped me and my partner develop a demonstration that we went to the state fair and won—

01-00:04:30

Li: Oh, wow.

01-00:04:31

Rendell: —first place with. Yes, there was—we were able to have a closer relationship with the county Extension agents. Before I left Riverside, I personally knew most of the advisors in the county office.

01-00:04:47

Li: So what were the kinds of things you felt like you got out of participating in 4-H as a kid? Was it scientific knowledge that you were learning—

01-00:05:01

Rendell: Probably, to be candid, I didn't learn that much scientific knowledge. I was laughed at at the county fair when I took my cow to the fair. But I did learn, and enjoyed, giving demonstrations, telling other people how to do things. And I did this with a partner, and we did very well at it. And then later on, interestingly, in 1951, I had just finished high school. California, for the first time, started participating in the International Farm Youth Exchange Program—

01-00:05:36

Li: Oh, right. Okay.

01-00:05:38

Rendell: —where young people from one country go and live on farms for five or six months and exchangees come back here. Fortunately the advisor in Riverside County thought that I'd be a good candidate and I was successful. One of five Californians that participated that first year in 1951.

01-00:05:59

Li: Oh, wow. So did you go abroad or did you host somebody?

01-00:06:03

Rendell: No, I went abroad as an exchangee to England and Wales for six months.

01-00:06:06

Li: Oh, wow.

01-00:06:09

Rendell: Fortunately, an English speaking country, for me, anyway. But it was a country that my father had been born in, so it was particularly interesting for me.

01-00:06:17

Li: Where was your father born?

01-00:06:18

Rendell: In Bristol, England.

01-00:06:20

Li: In Bristol, okay.

01-00:06:20

Rendell: Although he lived most—the family moved to Canada when he was only six months old. So most of his life was there.

01-00:06:28

Li: So were you studying sheep and cows on that trip?

01-00:06:34

Rendell: The English had a young farmers group that was kind of analogous to our 4-H program. Their concept was a little different than here in the US. As we hosted exchangees, we wanted them to be with one family, one farm for several months. So they really became a member of the family. In England, they were all so anxious to have us that we didn't stay in one place very long. I actually lived with over twenty different farm families.

01-00:07:10

Li: Wow. In what amount of time?

01-00:07:13

Rendell: Well, anywhere from a week or a week and a half. Yes. It was nice in that I got to see an awful lot of the British Isles. England, Wales, and the Channel Islands. And got acquainted with families, but not—didn't really get out to work in the fields with them very much.

01-00:07:32

Li: So what was the aim of that program? Was it to learn new techniques or different—?

01-00:07:36

Rendell: Mostly international understanding. Yes. But again, when you ask what did I learn, Don Addis had to raise over \$1,000 for me to participate in this program and equip me with a camera. And he had a good system. He contacted every farm center, every 4-H club, almost every service club in the county of Riverside. So they all felt a part of the program. So when I came back, then I gave over a hundred talks throughout the county about the program, the participation, as well.

01-00:08:11

Li: And so this was before college? This was—

01-00:08:13

Rendell: I had finished one year of community college. And then the whole experience of 4-H. The one year of community college, I thought I was in pre-law, but I decided through participation in this program that I did want to major in agriculture, so then I went to Davis and majored in Animal Science.

01-00:08:34

Li: In Animal Science at Davis?

01-00:08:35

Rendell: Um-hmm.

01-00:08:37

Li: Were there any mentors at Davis or teachers that you remember being significant in your time?

01-00:08:47

Rendell: Well, yes, as a matter of fact. I was—as an Animal Science major, I was assigned to Dr. Bill Weir. He was my advisor. I was the advisee. Yes, extraordinary man. He was very supportive great guidance. He happened also to be an advisor for the living group I was in and I think several other groups that I ended up belonging to. He became, I think, at one time dean of students up there to kind of reflect on the kind of a person he was. Yes. But when I started Davis, there were 1,400 and some students. Total. Graduate students, veterinary students, and there were over 350 PhD teachers and researchers on the campus. It was a great student/faculty ratio.

01-00:09:44

Li: And so did you have to pick a focus on Animal Science. Was there—?

01-00:09:51

Rendell: I always thought that dairy husbandry was my particular focus.

01-00:09:56

Li: Yes. And so that was what year that you went to Davis? 19—

01-00:10:01

Rendell: I started in the spring semester of 1952, so I was there three and a half years. Graduated in '55.

01-00:10:10

Li: And what did you do after that with your degree?

01-00:10:14

Rendell: As I say, I volunteered for the draft. Got my two years of military obligation out of the way. And then after finishing that, I started immediately working for Agricultural Extension. Incidentally, over the years, some of the—we called the same thing different names. It was definitely Agricultural Extension

in those days, now it's Cooperative Extension. The staffing titles were different. Every county had a farm advisor who was the lead person. Now everybody is a farm advisor or a home advisor or a youth advisor, and there's a County Director that's the coordinator.

01-00:10:56

Li: So you—when you were in the military, you said you were in the Army?

01-00:11:00

Rendell: In the Army, yes.

01-00:11:01

Li: And what did you do for them?

01-00:11:03

Rendell: Worked in the food analysis laboratory testing quality of food that the Army was buying.

01-00:11:10

Li: Okay. And so when you got hired by Extension, what was the position you were hired as?

01-00:11:14

Rendell: I started as what they call an Extension Assistant, but it was an academic position. But there was a vacancy as a 4-H advisor that had developed and it was 4-H Farm Advisor in those days. Just about three months after I started. So before the first of the year, I was a 4-H Farm Advisor.

01-00:11:37

Li: And did you seek out that position? Did you want to work with 4-H? Did you—?

01-00:11:41

Rendell: Yes. And I had—as a senior at Davis, I had taken a course in Extension that Extension people were taught, and actually interviewed for a job in Extension. Well, it's interesting when I reflect back on it, because later on, with the Civil Rights Act and with affirmative action becoming an important part of the University's program, and particularly in agricultural Extension because part of our funding comes from the federal government, that we had federal reviews, as well as state. You know, having an open process with adequate pools for a selection of people. You know, it wasn't that way in those days and it gives me a greater appreciation for the importance of advertising. And if you want to have a diverse staff, you've got to advertise and let people know about the program. But I was destined to be an Extension Agent when I was still a 4-H member. I traveled to Davis when I first started as a student with the County Director of Extension, Riverside County. He was going up to a meeting there and so he gave me a ride. He knew I was enrolling and he gave me a ride up and arranged for me to stay in his fraternity house overnight until I moved into a dorm. That was just the way it was.

01-00:13:40

Li: So you were in that network early on?

01-00:13:43

Rendell: I was in that network, yes.

01-00:13:45

Li: So when you took the 4-H job, that was your first kind of long-term position that you held with the Extension?

01-00:13:57

Rendell: Yes, yes. And I've—well, I was 4-H advisor then from 19—well, the end of 1957 until 1966. But I became eligible for sabbatic leave and it would have been in '62, '63, and I was awarded a 4-H fellowship, which was a very advantageous grant and it was a great experience, too. We actually—there were six of us nationally. You had to be working at least half-time in 4-H. We went to Washington, DC for a year. Spent half the time in the USDA studying government, first all the agencies in the USDA, and then we were encouraged to enroll in one of the many universities in that area. The five of my colleagues all went to the University of Maryland and majored in Extension programs, but I went to American University and majored in Public Administration. I'd already identified my goal then was to go into administration.

01-00:15:06

Li: Okay. What was it that appealed to you about administration? Why did you choose that?

01-00:15:12

Rendell: Well, I thought the kinds of experiences I'd had as 4-H, quite frankly, equipped me better at administration. There's—you know, you may know enough about the University. There's not much monetary incentive to take administrative assignments. But I probably thought that I would—I would be—frankly, I'd be better at that than going deeper into a discipline and working in livestock or dairy.

01-00:15:40

Li: Right. Could we go back a bit. When you were first a 4-H advisor, from 1957 on, what was your job? What were your daily tasks like as the 4-H advisor? Were you in Sacramento or were you—?

01-00:15:56

Rendell: No, this was in—now in the City of San Bernardino was our office and serving San Bernardino County, which was really right next door to where I grew up in Riverside. San Bernardino is a huge county geographically. To digress for a moment, Robin, some of my first experiences in San Bernardino County—I spent a lot of time with a man by the name of Art Campbell who had already retired from Extension. But it was tremendously interesting because he had been the second person hired in that county.

01-00:16:40

Li:

By Extension ever?

01-00:16:41

Rendell:

By Extension, yes. Would have been in the early 1920s. I'm not sure of the exact date. But asking some of the things I did, it was all the way from putting on large training meetings for leaders and members, but he ended up going out to many of the communities, as well. And two of the clubs that were the farthest out from San Bernardino were in Newbury and Hinckley. These were about a hundred miles from—And on many occasions, Art Campbell would go out with me. He was retired, but he was always available and the communities loved to have him as a judge for their fairs and the community activities. And I always thought if I were to ever write an article for the Readers Digest on the most unforgettable character I'd ever met, he would be one of my candidates. Just briefly. He grew up in Pennsylvania, rode his bicycle and boxcars to East Lansing, Michigan, to go to school at Michigan State. Played football there for three years, and was, at least one of those years, was an undefeated national champion. His first assignment in Extension was in Wyoming, where he was equipped with a motorcycle to do his farm calls, and then he came to San Bernardino as an assistant farm advisor, the second staff member in San Bernardino County. It was said of Art Campbell that he knew every native plant and every well in the county. And I believed it.

01-00:18:24

Li:

So did he introduce you, then, to farmers?

01-00:18:26

Rendell:

He did, yes. And to the families. As I said, he was very much beloved. And then he told me about the county. Gosh, we would be driving out and he'd point up to a canyon and say, "There's where the Indians gathered when they came out to raid the settlers in the valley for the cattle." He told me about the original farm advisor in San Bernardino County, a man by the name of Henry Wilder. I'm not sure, but I think his assignment must have been—his specialty must have been in citrus. But Henry was a very successful investor, apparently, in commercial property in San Bernardino, and when he died, he left \$100,000 to a youth organization. Interestingly, it wasn't 4-H, it was the YMCA. And today, there is a YMCA camp near Running Springs in the San Bernardino mountains, there is a Wilder Hall. The other legacy of Henry Wilder, and I learned this after I had been appointed County Director in San Bernardino, he left on yellow tablet paper over 200 pages handwritten, mostly with a pencil, of his annual reports. It was very helpful to me because not long after I became County Director, the annual Farm Bureau meeting observed the fiftieth anniversary of Extension in San Bernardino and Dan Aldrich was the Chancellor at Irvine at that time. Had been dean of the College of Agriculture—of the system-wide Division of Agriculture. He was the main speaker and I was to give a speech. And boy, this background, it was more

information than I could ever use as far as the history of Agriculture Extension in San Bernardino County.

01-00:20:30

Li: And what year was that?

01-00:20:33

Rendell: I don't remember exactly, Robin, but I'm sure—you know, the Smith-Lever Act that set up federal funding for Agriculture Extension was 1914. Program started—county started having programs in California maybe 1917, 1918.

01-00:20:55

Li: Right. So fifty years after that.

01-00:20:55

Rendell: It would have been 1966 or 1967.

01-00:21:02

Li: Okay. So what—so what are the other positions that you held, then? So you went to American University and you finished a Master's degree, was it?

01-00:21:11

Rendell: Yes, Master's degree in Public Administration, yes.

01-00:21:12

Li: And then at that point, what did you want to do with that degree?

01-00:21:16

Rendell: Well, my goal in going there was to be prepared to take on some administrative responsibilities, to be a County Director. And fortunately for my goal, that position became available there in San Bernardino County just a couple of years after I came back there.

01-00:21:40

Li: Okay. And did you get married or have children during this period or were you—?

01-00:21:47

Rendell: I was married, yes. I went to Washington, DC on this sabbatic leave with my wife at that time, Kathleen, and two very small children. One less than a year and one less than two years old.

01-00:22:14

Li: So you made a cross-country move with a family.

01-00:22:14

Rendell: Right, yes.

01-00:22:17

Li: And so then you returned to San Bernardino what year? Do you remember?

01-00:22:21
Rendell: That would have been in—Well, it was an interesting year to be in Washington, because it was the year that John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

01-00:22:32
Li: Oh, wow.

01-00:22:34
Rendell: We were—all of us were in the Senate chambers when they passed the nuclear test ban treaty in that year. I can remember it because the classes at American University were downtown, just a few blocks from the White House. After Johnson had become President, but they hadn't moved into the White House yet. Just stepping on a curb and it's just a dark area and there's a limousine that drove by just like that. Light was on, there was Lyndon Johnson in the back seat studying some papers. It was that kind of a—that kind of a time back there, yes.

01-00:23:18
Li: So did you feel like you were sort of in the middle of world events?

01-00:23:23
Rendell: Really—really were, yes.

01-00:23:23
Li: Yes. Were you reluctant at all, then, to go back to San Bernardino after having been—

01-00:23:29
Rendell: Oh, no. No. It was—you know, it was the University. I planned all the time to go back. In fact as the Extension advisors are academic members of the university and are entitled to the sabbatic privilege. The purpose is to make you better qualified for your job or what you're going to be doing, yes.

01-00:23:57
Li: So when you went back, you went back as a 4-H advisor for a few years?

01-00:24:03
Rendell: Yes.

01-00:24:03
Li: In San Bernardino?

01-00:24:06
Rendell: Um-hmm.

01-00:24:05
Li: And then how did you become the County Director after that?

01-00:24:07
Rendell: Well, very soon after I came back, the County Director position came vacant and the Regional Director asked me if I was interested in being considered.

And I was pretty young at that time. You know, it was a big staff. There were like eleven academic advisors. I would have been the youngest—I was the youngest one of them, I think. But after a few days, I went back to Hal Schwalm and said, “Yes, I would be interested.” But by this time, he had already arranged for a colleague of Bill Wood’s, who was a farm management specialist at Riverside—at UCR, to be the County Director. But then not long after that, the long-term County Director at Riverside, N. L. MacFarland, retired. Fisk was still living in Riverside and Riverside was a larger agricultural county than San Bernardino, so Fisk was made the County Director in Riverside County and then I was appointed County Director in San Bernardino County.

01-00:25:21

Li:

Okay. So as County Director, who were you accountable to? Who did you report to, or—

01-00:25:26

Rendell:

Well, University wide, I reported to this—again, the title's changed. It was assistant state director, or we call him now Regional Director. They had an office at Riverside and they changed the boundary of the region all the time. Every time there's a new vice-president. But that was the chain, from the County Director to the assistant state director or Regional Director, and from there to the Director. But you also—although there wasn't a direct line, our support for being in the county was dependent upon county funding. So the County Director was the designated university person to interact with the county government and obtain the county government funding. For your support to be there, the building, the secretaries, the travel within the county, and this sort of thing.

01-00:26:26

Li:

So what do you think was the most important characteristic of a County Director? What was the most important quality?

01-00:26:35

Rendell:

Interestingly, I would characterize the time of the fifties as a time—and maybe early sixties, as very strong County Directors in the state. N. L. McFarland, Ken Smoyer of Los Angeles County, Elwood Moore of San Diego County. They were very able and they were very strong. But I think Fisk and I had a little different style. We were colleagues next door to each other, but I think the main responsibility of the County Director was to help—because all of the people that you supposedly were supervising were specialists in different areas than yours. The area advisor, citrus advisor. So we just—we would support them and help them reach their potential.

01-00:27:29

Li:

And how many specialists did you have in San Bernardino at that time?

01-00:27:33

Rendell:

I think there were eleven advisors.

01-00:27:36

Li: Okay. And the projects they would work on, where would the ideas for those projects come from?

01-00:27:41

Rendell: Well, theoretically the specialist—the specialists were the link, were the Extension people between the counties and the campus. And most of them were housed right in the departments that they were specialists in. And this was at Riverside. Most of—of course, a larger number of them at Davis and some at Berkeley. So they were always bringing the latest information and the latest ideas to the advisors. The advisors, in turn—you know, counties would come up with different problems, special problems that the advisors had either helped the grower with and find the answer, or go to the specialist and try to obtain help from them and the department they were from.

01-00:28:30

Li: So did you spend most of your time as County Director in your office, visiting campuses, visiting farmers?

01-00:28:43

Rendell: A lot of meetings.

01-00:28:45

Li: A lot of meetings.

01-00:28:47

Rendell: A lot of meetings in the county and on the campuses, as well. Yes.

01-00:28:54

Li: Okay. So in the county, would you be meeting with politicians or—?

01-00:28:58

Rendell: Politicians, grower groups.

01-00:29:02

Li: And what was the main responsibility in terms of—when you would meet with them, would you be advocating on behalf of the specialist projects or getting information from them to take back to the specialists? How would you describe your job?

01-00:29:14

Rendell: Yes. In particular—but again, if there was a problem in the dairy industry, our advisor—our dairy advisor would know more about that than the County Director would, even if the County Director was an Animal Science major. And he would go to the specialist at the department in Davis to get the answer. But there were different organizations. There's a cow dairy herd improvement association that the advisor would work with to help improve the production of cows. I might work with him on an organizational activity like that.

01-00:30:06

Li: Okay. So what was your relationship with the university then, at that time? Would you be visiting campuses very often or—?

01-00:30:17

Rendell: We'd probably go to Davis for—I still tried to keep up in the Animal Science field for one or two training meetings a year. But more and more we were going to both Davis, and Berkeley in those days, because the University Hall was—the headquarters was in Berkeley, not in Oakland, for all kinds of advisory committee meetings.

01-00:30:44

Li: Okay. And would you ever meet with County Directors from other states? Were there national meetings that you would go to or—?

01-00:30:52

Rendell: At the end of my career, when I was in San—Los Angeles County, yes, that happened more.

01-00:31:00

Li: So how much of an issue were county and government politics for you as County Director?

01-00:31:09

Rendell: I'm sorry?

01-00:31:09

Li: How much of an issue were local politics?

01-00:31:12

Rendell: You had to be very careful in that area. But I was very, very fortunate in San Bernardino County. I was County Director at the time of Proposition 13, which—the first impact of Proposition 13 was going to reduce our county budget by 44 percent. That was—so that would have taken away most of our support staff and travel, and so forth.

01-00:31:46

Li: Right. And that was—could you describe what Proposition 13 did, what it was about.

01-00:31:52

Rendell: Yes. It's still very important in California right now. It was an amendment to the Constitution that put a ceiling on property taxes of two percent of the assessed valuation, and then it could only go up one or two percent—or two percent a year.

01-00:32:08

Li: Right. So it changed it from market value to the earning potential of the land.

01-00:32:12

Rendell: Right.

01-00:32:13

Li: Okay. So were a lot of the growers in your area in support of this proposition?

01-00:32:19

Rendell: Oh, yes. Very much. But it was difficult as far as the revenue part of—made it difficult for anything that was dependent on—and county government was highly dependent upon property tax income.

01-00:32:34

Li: So was there a tension, then, between the local politics and the growers in terms of—?

01-00:32:39

Rendell: Well, no. Fortunately, we were small as far as the county government's big problem of adjusting to this. We were fortunate in that two of the five supervisors were former 4-H club members. One of them had kids that swam against my kids in swim club and we had some programs—by this time, we were reaching new audiences with urban 4-H and an expanded food and nutrition education program that were popular with those supervisors that didn't represent the agriculture community. So we actually, in San Bernardino County, got an increase. We ended up with an increase in our budget, which was unheard of that year, though.

01-00:33:35

Li: Can you tell me about urban 4-H, where the idea behind that came from, or what the philosophy behind it was?

01-00:33:44

Rendell: Well, again, when we get near the end of my career in Los Angeles, I can be more specific. But I think the idea in the sixties and seventies—it was—personally, it was interesting because I went back to Washington DC, and argued with my five colleagues that it wasn't wrong for there to be a public organization that just served rural youngsters. But by the time I came back and things happened—some things were happening nationally, I became personally convinced that we ought to make our programs available to all youth, and we ought to have a more diverse audience. We needed to do that. We needed to have a more diverse staff. So I—with the help of the state 4-H leader, I was able to get funds specifically to hire a Hispanic advisor and to try to reach Mexican American youth in San Bernardino.

01-00:35:00

Li: And was that unusual for the time? For—?

01-00:35:02

Rendell: Yes, it was very unusual. In fact, my regional director didn't like the idea, but the state 4-H leader took me right into the administrative group. This was the director and all the regional directors and sold the idea. The two of us did.

01-00:35:18

Li: And what year was that?

01-00:35:19

Rendell: That would have been in the early 1970s.

01-00:35:25

Li: Okay. And you mentioned earlier that the Civil Rights Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, was an important moment.

01-00:35:33

Rendell: Well it—yes. It changed the way that Cooperative Extension operated, because we were obligated to—we had responsibilities, both in program delivery and in staffing. And, of course, if you're going to have a diverse audience with your programs, you have to have a diverse staff, or you don't have credibility. And if you're going to have a diverse staff, you have to have qualified minorities in your pool. So personally I felt that was the key. You had to go out and find people that were different than all of us at that time. But I'll tell you, this was an extraordinarily embarrassing moment, I thought. But we used to have statewide meetings of all the academic staff, all the county staff, all the specialists. This would be about 600 people would meet at a statewide in a big hall. I can remember in the sixties. I don't remember who the speaker was, but the speaker chided the group because he or she looked out there and didn't see any faces of color and let us know that. And then there was a murmur over one side of the auditorium and we did—we had just hired one African American nutritionist, Mary Hall, and to me, that was almost worse than not having any, right. But I don't remember where we were going with this. But yes. I felt—I became—felt very strongly that even though we had limited resources, and you can't be everything to all people, but yes, the kind of information that we did have, youth development and nutrition and those sort of things, yes, we should make an effort that it was available to everyone.

01-00:37:36

Li: And were the growers a diverse group or were they pretty—?

01-00:37:41

Rendell: Well, part of our obligation was to identify racially. And you can imagine there was a lot of resistance to this—our potential audience. But, of course, most of our advisors are specialists in their own right and they were working primarily with commercial growers. Yes. Most of the dairymen in San Bernardino County were Dutch. You know, that's just the way it was. There were a few Portuguese, but that's the way it was. So it didn't impact unless the dairy advisor decided that part of his program was training—getting information to the milkers. Then, yes, then that made a whole different audience.

01-00:38:29

Li: Who were the milkers mostly made of then?

01-00:38:32

Rendell: They would probably be mostly Mexican Americans or Portuguese.

01-00:38:37

Li: So would you look for people that were bilingual? Was that important in this period?

01-00:38:41

Rendell: Very important, yes.

01-00:38:44

Li: And would they be Spanish speaking or Portuguese or—?

01-00:38:48

Rendell: No. It—when I say very important, it's when we started expanding the nutrition program, and then to a lesser extent, 4-H. No, it never became an issue in any of the agricultural areas.

01-00:39:06

Li: But in the 4-H.

01-00:39:08

Rendell: Yes, um-hmm.

01-00:39:10

Li: So how did you go about transforming your staff in this way, finding people to hire?

01-00:39:15

Rendell: Well, I have some interesting stories. The opportunity to really expand came with the federal funding for an expanded—what was called an expanded food and nutrition education program. You know, and to me here, it's almost a lesson in the way things happen in our democracy. There has to be almost a groundswell—you know, everybody agrees before big things get done. Global warming may be an example now. But it took a number of things to happen before this country really came to the grips with the fact that we had hunger and malnutrition. There was a poor people's march on Washington, D.C. Senator Humphrey had a series of Senate hearings on hunger and malnutrition. CBS had a hard-hitting series on hunger and malnutrition in this country. And some things like this happened before the George Murray—or Murphy, whoever the senator was from California at that time, agreed that there was. And I think it was probably after the poor people's march, which really targeted the Department of Agriculture. The Secretary of Agriculture found—at least this is the story that—in the Agriculture Adjustment Act of 1938, there was a provision that funds that were generated from tariffs on food products could and should be used to enhance the consumption of food in this country. So he identified those for this program for Extension. You know, prior to this time we had one home advisor in San Bernardino County. Very competent, but she was—and even the field of home economics has a lot of disciplines within it, nutrition just being one part of it. But we really decided that nutrition was the most important part of it. But before this program, she reached her audience primarily through other professionals, such as the county nurse or whatever. She would give programs for them or she would have a

large meeting in our auditorium where she sent newsletters out to people. But the people across town who might desperately need information on how to make their limited dollars for food get the best nutrition for their family, didn't come to these meetings or didn't read these newsletters. And what this EFNEP program did was provide us funds to hire paraprofessionals that Mrs. Austin then would train and then they would teach, person to person—at least the first years of it. They actually—not even in groups. We would hire them from the communities and then they would reach homemakers on a person-to-person basis.

01-00:42:37

Li: So would they do home visits?

01-00:42:38

Rendell: Home visits, right.

01-00:42:39

Li: And discuss issues of nutrition and economy.

01-00:42:40

Rendell: Right, exactly. Um-hmm, um-hmm.

01-00:42:44

Li: And so would you hire mostly women for that position?

01-00:42:45

Rendell: Mostly women, yes. But suddenly we went from a staff of thirty advisor—not thirty advisors, but eleven advisors with clerical support and some field assistants, to thirty-five of these ladies. So it was different cast change.

01-00:43:05

Li: Now were they—so then were they sort of managed by—?

01-00:43:12

Rendell: I became very important—involved in it, because the home economist, who really headed up the program, her specialty was—I mean, and she had her hands full teaching the nutrition part of it. But the searching and the hiring and the management of the program. So I became very much involved in it.

01-00:43:33

Li: And so most of these people who do home visits, were they mostly—?

01-00:43:36

Rendell: We hired them from the communities. We identified—low-income was the criteria and we identified the low-income communities in the county that we thought were priority and—

01-00:43:46

Li: And recruited from that community.

01-00:43:46

Rendell: And recruited from that community.

01-00:43:49

Li: And so what were most of these women like, then? Were they Spanish speaking, Portuguese, mixed?

01-00:43:55

Rendell: Yes, probably. And I—yes, I shouldn't have mentioned Portuguese that much. It's not that big of a part of the population of San Bernardino County, although in some parts of the state they are important in the dairy industry. But yes. Spanish speaking and African American.

01-00:44:12

Li: And African American, okay. And this was still in mostly rural areas or both rural and urban?

01-00:44:20

Rendell: No, mostly urban.

01-00:44:23

Li: Mostly urban, okay. And do you remember what year this program was started?

01-00:44:28

Rendell: Yes. It would have been sixty—about '68, 1968.

01-00:44:35

Li: And so were similar—were other counties nearby doing similar programs?

01-00:44:38

Rendell: Yes. Riverside was very similar. I laugh because Fisk Phelps, who was the director then in Riverside County and had been sort of my mentor, we went to the state—some state meeting and nobody knew we had this money and nobody had any kind of a staffing pattern. Fisk and I decided on the plane what the staffing pattern should be. Ten—you know, ten aides and one supervisor and so forth. But other counties didn't want it and they didn't buy into it.

01-00:45:11

Li: But you were getting money from the federal government at some point?

01-00:45:13

Rendell: Yes, from the federal government to the University and then, yes. There were University people at the specialist level that both supported the program in the counties and did administration of it statewide.

01-00:45:30

Li: Okay. So was this separate from any kind of 4-H program, these home visits?

01-00:45:39

Rendell:

Well, that's a good question, because then there became a youth part of the EFNEP program, where we received some additional funding for a 4-H like program that emphasized nutrition. It was, quite frankly, less defined and probably less successful than the adult program. But it gave us an opportunity—and you originally asked well, how did I recruit these people in San Bernardino County. It gave me an opportunity to bring aboard an outstanding, for example, Mexican American young man, because I was working this program. I was on the Head Start advisory committee in San Bernardino County and I didn't know where to look. I had—earlier had looked—gone to the library and looked at this—actually had a book with the names of all the people that were graduating in home economics in the whole country, for every college and university.

01-00:46:51

Li:

Wow.

01-00:46:53

Rendell:

And most of the Spanish surnames in home economics were graduating from some college in New Mexico, New Mexico Highlands. Well, I tried to interview some of their graduates, to find them, but that was not very successful. But anyway, I got this recommendation from somebody on the Head Start Advisory Committee who was a few years out of UCR, that, well, Mike Trujillo, who was student body president at UCR, will be graduating this spring, and he thought he would be good. So I tried to run Mike Trujillo down. He was living in a small house in an orange grove. I mean, he talked about this at his retirement—or promotion or something. But he came aboard as a youth advisor. Later, when I left San Bernardino and became the Regional Director, I recommended his appointment as County Director.

01-00:47:58

Li:

And did he take over as County Director, then, after you left?

01-00:48:02

Rendell:

Yes, um-hmm.

01-00:48:03

Li:

So what year—so how long were you County Director of San Bernardino?

01-00:48:08

Rendell:

From 1966 to 1978.

01-00:48:14

Li:

So what were the big changes that you saw in San Bernardino County agriculture in those years?

01-00:48:20

Rendell:

Well, in agriculture, San Bernardino County was still very important. It was during those years—most of the time, it was the number one milk-producing county in the United States. Or some of them, anyway, and was the number

one egg-producing county in the United States. Other agriculture was pretty diversified. The grapes were disappearing and the oranges were disappearing with urbanization. But that's what was happening. The urbanization. Because interestingly, it's a huge county. As I mentioned, over 20,000 square miles. You know, it's approximately 200 miles by 100 miles—the largest county by far in the continental US. But most of the agriculture is south of the San Bernardino Mountains—you know, in the southwest corner where most of the people live, too. So yes, it's—

01-00:49:21

Li: So it changed a lot then, it sounds like.

01-00:49:23

Rendell: It was just changing a lot, yes. Disappearing.

01-00:49:25

Li: And so in some ways, the urban 4-H kind of reflected the fact that there was more urban space in San Bernardino County than there had been when you were growing up.

01-00:49:32

Rendell: Right.

01-00:49:35

Li: So could you describe the average participant in the 4-H programs when you first started back in 1957? Was it—?

01-00:49:47

Rendell: Well, yes. The age of 4-H membership was from ten to twenty-one years old in those days. But by far, most of the youngsters that participated were between ten and fourteen years old. Probably more girls than boys. But yes, there were—

01-00:50:11

Li: Mostly—

01-00:50:12

Rendell: —mostly white. They were, by far, mostly white. They were mostly rural or semi-rural. You know, suburban. So they were places—they lived places where they could raise animals and this sort of thing.

01-00:50:27

Li: And so by 1978, when you left San Bernardino, what was the average participant like in the 4-H programs?

01-00:50:36

Rendell: During that period, that wouldn't have changed that much, except that we were reaching youth in urban areas by that time, yes. With this youth EFNEP program.

01-00:50:46

Li: And what prompted your move to Los Angeles County?

01-00:50:51

Rendell: Well, I went—it was between San Bernardino County and Los Angeles County. I went to the Riverside Campus as the Regional Director, then, in 1978. '78, yes.

01-00:51:08

Li: And what were the responsibilities of the Regional Director?

01-00:51:12

Rendell: They changed it several times while I was there. Primarily, it was to coordinate, supervise the Southern California counties, which were from San Luis Obispo south on the coast and from Inyo/Mono south on the eastern border. But then also, later on during my relatively brief time there, four or five years, it had some program responsibilities for coordinating statewide small farms program and master gardener program.

01-00:52:03

Li: And the small farms program. I mean, that was interested in diversification, as well, right?

01-00:52:09

Rendell: Yes, it was. And I think the university had gotten some criticism from the legislature, particularly a legislator from the San Jose area about we were only serving big corporate farmers. But anyway, that—and this strong urge to reach a more diverse audience. Sometimes you have to reach new audiences with your same resources. Sometimes you're fortunate to get new resources. But our director was able to convince the University to put a request to the legislature in the University's budget for—I think it was six advisors to work specifically with small farms. And that was my program area. And, in fact, I testified before the legislature—our committee in the legislature on it. We were successful. And because the small farms that we wanted to reach were mostly Spanish speaking, we did hire Spanish-speaking advisors, then, for all those positions.

01-00:53:31

Li: So was it six for the whole state or—?

01-00:53:32

Rendell: Six for the whole state, yes. An interesting thing about that — they weren't—and of course, we had some other Hispanic advisors through the regular process by this time. But another person that I felt very, very good about was the County Director. In fact, he became County Director, at my recommendation as Regional Director, in Imperial County. Refugio Cuco Gonzalez. Of the—all of the Spanish speaking advisors that we had in the whole state—and as I say, there were maybe eight or ten at the most, five or six of them were from this same high school, relatively little high school, in Calexico, California, yes. And that's where Cuco had been the ag teacher. So

he must have been some role model, yes. Because, yes, these fellows—one was a farm management graduate of Davis and another one—and they were all—yes. Very able.

01-00:54:53

Li: And all mentored by the same—

01-00:54:53

Rendell: Yes. And at least they all knew, anyway, Cuco.

01-00:54:59

Li: So what do you think made him particularly strong at what he did?

01-00:55:02

Rendell: Well, he had a lot of personal drive, he was very personable and he was very able. Yes. Actually, when I went—then was appointed Regional Director—he had been 4-H advisor in Imperial County before. And I knew him because we were both—you know, I was either County Director or advisor in San Bernardino during that time. And then, I don't know whether he thought it was a dead end or what, he went back to being an ag teacher at Calexico High School. But when I became Regional Director, the vice-president wanted to make a change in Imperial County leadership. Fortunately for me, he made the rotation of the person who was the advisor and I encouraged Cuco to apply for the position, and he went through the search and so that was my second very strong appointment as a County Director. First Michael Trujillo and then Cuco. They were the first Hispanic County Directors in California—males.

01-00:56:07

Li: Wow. And this is late seventies, then?

01-00:56:11

Rendell: This is late seventies, yes.

01-00:56:14

Li: Wow. So in the time that you were working with the Extension, what do you think its main purpose was? How would you describe its mission?

01-00:56:28

Rendell: Well, it's pretty simple. It's to take information that's developed on the campus to the growers, the farmers, homemakers, youth in the counties, and when we don't have the answers to the problems, to send back through the specialists to the campus to find the answers.

01-00:56:49

Li: And do you feel like that mission stayed pretty much the same in the time that you were working with Extension?

01-00:56:54

Rendell:

Yes. That's—you know, we may have tried to reach different audiences and do it in different ways with different resources, but that is the basic model, yes. It's the only reason for our existence.

01-00:57:08

Li:

So when there's criticism that the Extension serves big business more than farmers, did that seem counter to the goal of Extension or did it seem like, "Well, these are the people who are doing the farming,"?

01-00:57:21

Rendell:

Well, depending who you ask that question to. An advisor could stay very, very busy and very, very productive in a large strong agriculture county. You know, not even satisfying all the needs of large production agriculture.

01-00:57:37

Li:

So you said that you were at UC Riverside for just four or five years?

01-00:57:43

Rendell:

Yes, um-hmm.

01-00:57:42

Li:

So then what happened?

01-00:57:45

Rendell:

Then I took a sabbatic leave and—not to come back to the same job as I did in San Bernardino and then I went to Los Angeles.

01-00:57:55

Li:

Okay. And so yours was an academic appointment at some point?

01-00:58:00

Rendell:

Yes. Yes, that's a good question, too, because I think those Regional Director positions now are in a management series. But yes, it was an academic position.

01-00:58:19

Li:

So what were you hired as for Los Angeles County? What was your position?

01-00:58:22

Rendell:

I worked in 4-H again for a while and then became County Director soon after that.

01-00:58:28

Li:

Okay. And so is that a mostly urban county at this point or—?

01-00:58:36

Rendell:

Well, yes. It's interesting because our counties are large geographically. And even though Los Angeles County—and, of course, I've been out of it now for ten years, but had a population then of about ten million people. It's well over

ten million people now. It still had some important agriculture. It was still ranked sixteenth in California in agriculture production.

01-00:59:04

Li: Really?

01-00:59:05

Rendell: It was still among the top twenty-five in the nation.

01-00:59:09

Li: That's amazing. I mean, that counters most people's assumptions.

01-00:59:13

Rendell: Yes. Now, the largest part of that came from nursery production, horticulture. But the county's very large. You know, the Antelope Valley is part of Los Angeles County with field crops, alfalfa, onions.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 06-10-2008.mp3

02-00:00:00

Li: This is Robin Li on June tenth speaking with George Rendell, Long Beach, California. So you were talking about your move to Los Angeles County.

02-00:00:11

Rendell: Well, it just occurred to me. Before we leave the Riverside Campus, it was—one of my responsibilities there was to give statewide leadership oversight to the master gardener program.

02-00:00:25

Li: Oh, right, you mentioned that.

02-00:00:27

Rendell: And that's a very interesting, very successful program, I think the development of the program really didn't take additional resources as we talked about with the small farms program. And it was really built upon an improvement in the basic 4-H model of using volunteers as extenders of information. The improvements were that people were interested in—either had a background or were interested in plant science applied to be a volunteer. They went through an interview process. This was the basic model. There would be variations from county to county. But in all cases, they would receive, then, if they were selected to be a volunteer, a very structured, very intense training for forty hours. That was usually the standard. And the agreement was—and they would sign a contract. In some cases, they even have a job description of what they're going to do afterwards. But after they receive this training, then they made a commitment to be a volunteer for eighty hours in all areas of plant science. So the different kinds of tasks that

these people do depends on what their skill and interest happens to be. But it's been a very, very popular program. And it did not originate in California. Other states were using it. But we have used it very, very successfully.

02-00:02:02

Li: So who would train the master gardeners?

02-00:02:04

Rendell: If the county had a horticulture advisor, they would usually coordinate it. But specialists from the campus would often be involved in the training, too. The advisors often liked it because these master gardeners then, in many cases, assumed some of the tasks of the advisors, like answering phone calls from backyard gardeners or homeowners and so forth. And these tasks just—could be overwhelming to an academic advisor in terms of time.

02-00:02:49

Li: What were the demographic of these people who would participate in the program? Was it mostly small home gardeners in suburban areas?

02-00:02:56

Rendell: Yes. There's an awful lot of people out there that have a real interest and real love in working in home gardeners, yes, and they became—

02-00:03:06

Li: And would this include like if people wanted to do home—would have victory gardens earlier. You know, people who wanted to do agriculture, small scale agriculture at home.

02-00:03:17

Rendell: It would, yes.

02-00:03:23

Li: So then when you moved to Los Angeles County, what were your responsibilities there?

02-00:03:30

Rendell: Well, first to help agriculture survive, because over the years, the—interestingly, when I had been a 4-H member back in the late 1940s, Los Angeles was the number one agriculture county in the United States. It was number one in milk production, it was number one in citrus production. But that mostly had disappeared. There's not a dairy left in Los Angeles. But then we really started talking about some new and different kinds of programs. Of course, the EFNEP program, the expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, was a big part of Los Angeles County. But then, unique just to Los Angeles as far as California, were federal funds for an urban garden program. You know, these things don't sound much different from what we were doing, but it provided—and it was federal funding only for maybe half a dozen of the largest cities in the nation. But with the funds, we were able to hire paraprofessionals to help specifically for low-income audience in urban areas. So we hired people to help people in housing developments and so forth, and

help people clear and make arrangements from the city for water for community gardens in low income areas in the city.

02-00:05:18

Li: So again, did you have to shift the demographic of people you were hiring to do this kind of work?

02-00:05:23

Rendell: It was kind of natural because the kind of people that were interested in doing that kind of thing were fairly diverse. But it was a very successful program. Interestingly, in 1992 during the riots or the civil unrest in the city of Los Angeles—we actually had to evacuate our office. And I could see the fires burning. But many of our—most, in fact, of our community gardens were in that area and there wasn't one plant that was vandalized during that time. None.

02-00:06:08

Li: Wow.

02-00:06:09

Rendell: I think the point is, if the people that—are you really working with people in the community? And if it's their project, they protect it.

02-00:06:18

Li: Yes. So what years were you in Los Angeles?

02-00:06:23

Rendell: From '85 until my retirement in '97.

02-00:06:33

Li: So, I mean, it's hard to imagine what it would have been like to have been an agricultural advisor in Los Angeles in the eighties and nineties. It's just—

02-00:06:39

Rendell: We had a branch office in Lancaster. The advisor stationed there was a specialist in field crops. A horticulturist in Los Angeles works with nurseries and happens to be a world expert in palm trees.

02-00:07:08

Li: Yes, you mentioned that nursery production was a—it continues to be a big industry in Los Angeles County.

02-00:07:12

Rendell: It is.

02-00:07:13

Li: What kinds? Like ornamental trees or—?

02-00:07:17

Rendell: Yes. Um-hmm. Trees, plants, all kinds.

02-00:07:20
Li: And so—

02-00:07:21
Rendell: Many of them, interestingly, are grown under the power lines around the city.

02-00:07:27
Li: Oh, really?

02-00:07:29
Rendell: As you go up—if you leave on the 710 freeway, you'll notice all the power lines along there, and some of them have nurseries underneath them.

02-00:07:38
Li: And who were running the nurseries? What kind of—were these people who were like new to nursery production or were they established?

02-00:07:48
Rendell: Oh, no. Oh, these are established. It depends on the climate, but the big nursery producing counties in the state, in the nation, are San Diego and Orange and Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara right along the coast here.

02-00:08:06
Li: So how would you support those organizations? What kind of support did you offer?

02-00:08:09
Rendell: Oh, with information and problem solving.

02-00:08:12
Li: Was there any particular project?

02-00:08:13
Rendell: Yes. You know, we're talking about not so much the retail nurseries, but the production of the plants.

02-00:08:22
Li: Right. Was there a particular project that you could tell me about that you worked on with a nursery? A particular problem they might have had that would be something that—as an example of something the Extension would have helped with. Can you think of one?

02-00:08:38
Rendell: I can't think of a good one, though.

02-00:08:40
Li: Okay. Go back to that. So one of the things that I know Extension tries to do is have business and government and the University work together. How successful do you think that partnership has been?

02-00:08:58

Rendell:

Well, this may not be exactly what you're aiming at, but I can tell you a good example of a cooperative project between Extension and private industry. And that would be a very specialized youth program that we had in Los Angeles County. It was an after school activity program. The stars had all been lined up just right for this project. The UnoCal Corporation had their headquarters in Los Angeles. The CEO of UnoCal was a 4-H alumnus from a ranch in Colorado. The national 4-H staff had already found him. In fact, he was serving as president of the board for the national 4-H foundation, and we happened to have an advisor in 4-H in Los Angeles County who had been—and worked in the garden program and was very interested in reaching low income youth. And Roger Beach was the CEO of UnoCal and he was interested in making something happen. And we ended up, after several years, with a really in-depth after-school activity program at every public housing development in the city and county of Los Angeles, which I think was 23—and as I said of course the housing authorities of both the city and the county, and the schools were involved in this, too. And we're talking about several million dollars. And it was per year. And it was a really in-depth—it was from three to four hours each afternoon. The kids came. We had paid staff there, hired from the community, trained and supported by paraprofessionals and two advisors. The first thing they did was got help with their homework. That's what they had to do. And then they did things like any 4-Her would do. Gardening, nutrition, and this sort of thing.

02-00:11:13

Li:

Wow. Did the program have a name? Was there—?

02-00:11:17

Rendell:

Yes. It was a 4-H activity—or 4-H after-school program. And they won national recognition. But—and it was really great, but then when these stars started disappearing—you know, when Roger Beach retired and when John Pusey retired, it was—there wasn't a support system then. It doesn't exist today to that extent. I think there's some other similar, not that in-depth, that program—that intense, but maybe more realistic programs, in a way, that still exist in—with Sharon Jung in Northern California, who I think now is the state 4-H leader. They have very good programs in San Diego County.

02-00:12:16

Li:

Was environmental education a part of what urban 4-H would deal with?

02-00:12:20

Rendell:

It would be, yes.

02-00:12:22

Li:

And what kinds of things would they talk about with the kids in terms of—would it be about air pollution or water quality, or what kinds of issues do you think?

02-00:12:34

Rendell: Well, I think most of it would be related to taking care of plants and plant growth.

02-00:12:41

Li: And you mentioned earlier that when you—

02-00:12:44

Rendell: These were—these were fairly young children. Yes. Eight, nine, and ten years of—

02-00:12:53

Li: OK, so grade school.

02-00:12:54

Rendell: Grade school, yes.

02-00:12:56

Li: You mentioned earlier that—you said when you were in Los Angeles County, you were more involved on the national level in terms of going to conferences or networking with other Extension—

02-00:13:06

Rendell: Well, several reasons for this. Of course, our urban garden program was a federally funded program. There weren't very many of us, so there would be national meetings there. But somebody identified—and I laugh at this, because it kind of tells how easy it is to start a professional organization. All you got to do is identify a specialty and—but there were several of us. I was not the initiator, but realized there were some very urban counties who were also very—still very important in agriculture. And the four that were first—we first got started talking together were the county agent in Houston, which is Harris County, Texas. The County Director in Phoenix, which is Maricopa County, one of probably the ten biggest agriculture counties in the nation. San Diego County, which is still a very, very important agriculture county. And we certainly made it, LA County, as far as being urban, and we were still important agriculturally. And we had these things in common, so we started getting together. Then other big cities that really didn't meet the criteria for being important in agriculture wanted to join in, so we soon had a national organization of big cities Extension.

02-00:14:38

Li: Oh. Because some people talk about California exceptionalism — that the California Extension had a very unique set of problems or unique situation, but it sounds like you found connections with people from other states around this issue of urban—

02-00:14:56

Rendell: Oh, definitely. Yes.

02-00:14:59

Li: And so what kind of issues did you share in common with these other agents? What were some of the things you would talk about when you would get together?

02-00:15:09

Rendell: Usually comes down to where do we get resources and support for our programs.

02-00:15:18

Li: Was land policy or land use an issue that you would talk about in terms of the development or the pressure to have development of agriculture land, what agricultural land there would be and—?

02-00:15:30

Rendell: Well, it was certainly an issue. It was an issue for Cooperative Extension. You sound like you've just talked to Bill Wood today. A specialist like Bill Wood we would usually call upon for those kinds of issues. It probably would have been a topic at a big cities conference.

02-00:15:50

Li: Okay. How did you see the interest of public and private interacting in your work in Extension in terms of the commercial interests of the nurseries or the growers or big business, and the needs of the community surrounding the {inaudible}.

02-00:16:16

Rendell: Well, in many areas, of course there—and historically, with the youth program, 4-H, there would be just example after example where there had been very, very successful and very supportive relationships between big business, whether it was Bank of America or UnoCal or whatever, in the 4-H program. Perhaps—maybe due more to conflicts between—everybody wants to be first in line to get information, I suppose. But I think maybe I wandered here. But I haven't personally been in situations where there have been the big conflicts over water use and this sort of thing in either of my county experiences.

02-00:17:11

Li: Right. Those were not critical issues.

02-00:17:13

Rendell: No, no. Of course, the availability of water was a big issue in both of them.

02-00:17:22

Li: So what do you mean, the availability of water? You mean both for the city and for agricultural production?

02-00:17:27

Rendell: Right.

02-00:17:28

Li: So what would your role be in negotiating that? Would you be getting information from growers about needs they had?

02-00:17:36

Rendell: Yes. But most—specialized issues like that frankly we would probably call upon a specialist, like Dr. Wood.

02-00:17:47

Li: So it sounds like a lot of your job was having a wide network, and knowing who to call on.

02-00:17:53

Rendell: It was indeed, yes.

02-00:17:59

Li: So would you say that—did you feel comfortable calling on people all across the state or would problems probably be handled within regions at that time?

02-00:18:09

Rendell: Oh. Well, it depends on what the problem was. Even within the University, sometimes we would go to Davis, sometimes to Berkeley, sometimes to Riverside.

02-00:18:22

Li: Okay. And then what do you think has been the Extension's most successful project or most important influence in the last decade or so that you were with the Extension in the eighties and nineties. What was the most important role do you think Extension played in the counties that you were in?

02-00:18:48

Rendell: Well, my personal bias is seeing the people, whether they were youth or adults that changed or had opportunities to participation in our Extension programs. And, of course, the most dramatic examples would be in some of the new audiences that we reached. You know, one of the first ladies that we hired in the EFNEP program in San Bernardino County ended up going back, getting her degree in college, and last I heard she was on the school board in San Bernardino. Those—it would be those kinds of things over and over again.

02-00:19:36

Li: And in Los Angeles County, was there a larger Asian population that you were working with, too, in terms of—?

02-00:19:44

Rendell: Yes. And historically, interestingly, the nursery growers, a very high percentage of them are Asian, particularly Japanese American.

02-00:19:55

Li: But they were a later generation, so language wasn't as much of an issue.

02-00:19:58

Rendell: That's correct, yes.

02-00:20:00

Li: And then, but for the urban 4-H, were you also working with—maybe more recent Asian immigrants, as well as Spanish speaking?

02-00:20:11

Rendell: Most of our outreach would have been not only to—diverse in terms of ethnicity, but again, we were pretty small with ten million people and we were—most of our outreach programs were also aimed at low income.

02-00:20:28

Li: Right. So that was your main priority?

02-00:20:32

Rendell: That was our main priority. Right, yes. Where they were in—whether it was a youth program in housing developments or the urban gardening program. So frankly our main language challenge was Spanish.

02-00:20:48

Li: And so were you focused, as well, on increasing access to fruits and vegetables as well as teaching about nutrition to urban populations?

02-00:20:57

Rendell: Yes. In fact, we had one advisor who took a special interest, yes, in specialty crops and vegetables, and in fruits and in them being available to audiences.

02-00:21:16

Li: Let's see. I was thinking of the question of specific projects or programs that you worked with. Is there one thing that you're most proud of that you accomplished? I mean, in addition to placing certain people in positions. But was there particularly a project that you felt like really encapsulated the things you wanted to achieve working with Extension?

02-00:21:42

Rendell: Most of my work was through other people. I probably indicated that when I was in the regional office, the thing I'm proudest of are the four County Directors that were appointed during my tenure. We talked about Cuco Gonzales and Mike Trujillo. The other was Diane Wallace in San Diego County, who I'd—we'd worked together in San Bernardino years and years ago. And then Nicky King, Nicelma King, who interestingly, she came—she answered an ad in the paper. She had three degrees from UCLA and was working for Rand Corporation, so she knew her—she had her research background and Extension looked interesting to her, but she didn't know anything about it. But, yes, in fact, she was still in Los Angeles County as County Director then when I went there. But then she was appointed Regional Director up in the North Central region. She's on the faculty now because that position was—they reorganized the line and that position was eliminated. But applied behavioral science was split into two departments, and I don't

remember the name of them, but she's on the faculty there now. Another thing was—this was my other nominee for the most unforgettable character I've ever met. My tenure at UCR was almost the same as Chancellor Tomas Rivera. He came right after I did. And this was interesting, because he came from the University of Texas. He was a poet, was his—you know, his discipline was in, I guess, literature. But he had worked on several campuses of the University of Texas. I think the most recent was the University of Texas at El Paso. He was from a migrant labor family. But with the University of Texas, and I guess his childhood background, he had this great admiration for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service in this system of being everywhere. See, that wasn't the University of Texas program, that was the land grant university, which was Texas A&M. So here he found himself as the chancellor of a University of California campus with about, I don't know, twenty-five or thirty Extension specialists housed in his department and a regional office there, and he thought it was wonderful. So he went with me to county visits. Overnight to San Diego, to Imperial. He went on farm visits and twice, in 1980 and 1984, we co-sponsored meetings for all of our academic staff in the whole region to come to Riverside and to interact with their departments. And a few of these county people would—Riverside would be the natural link for them if they were in entomology or horticulture, but more than not, it didn't have any academic home there. So it was—tragically for the University, he died as a very young man. But he was a great guy.

02-00:25:32

Li: So you would go—you spent a fair amount of time, then, visiting people?

02-00:25:38

Rendell: Yes.

02-00:25:38

Li: Around your county, would you drive around? I mean, it's a huge county. Would you spend a lot of time away from the office on driving and visiting farms and going to meetings, things like that?

02-00:25:49

Rendell: No. As the Regional Director, of course, if I went to a county, I went to the county office and sometimes they would have things in the field that they wanted to show me. And that was—that would be that kind of a setting and probably there'd be a meeting or some kind of a social event when Chancellor Rivera—the occasions that he went with me. No, in the county, in Los Angeles County, I would like to see what the advisors were doing and they would usually invite me to some of their meetings. You know, when the advisor in Antelope Valley was having a meeting for alfalfa growers, well, I would try to get out to some of those meetings.

02-00:26:29

Li: Was there a fair amount of migrant labor in San Bernardino and Los Angeles in the periods that you were there?

02-00:26:37

Rendell:

Not in Los Angeles County. Probably some in San Bernardino. But it was not—citrus was the main industry. It was dependent upon it. But they were mostly local and worked with labor contractors.

02-00:26:55

Li:

Because working with labor, was that a project that Extension worked on?

02-00:27:01

Rendell:

No. I think in San Bernardino, probably the biggest example was that our dairy advisor did have some meetings for milkers, because the proper milking techniques are so important to mastitis and other diseases.

02-00:27:19

Li:

Is there anything else that—was there a critical moment in Extension—in a period that you were with the Extension that you can think of that you would want to talk about that we haven't talked about yet or a particular period that we haven't discussed?

02-00:27:38

Rendell:

No. We may have gone back and forth, but I think I brought you back to most of the things that I would have liked to have talked about. Yes.

02-00:27:48

Li:

Okay. So I guess when you retired from Extension in 1997, what were your hopes, or as you left the Extension for the future of its work. What would you hope to see it continue to do?

02-00:28:10

Rendell:

As you know, the University and all county governments are going through a very tough budget cycle right now. Unfortunately, this happens in California in cycles all the time. There's got to be a better system than spending all the money in the boom years so they don't have any when the economy goes bad. So unfortunately—Extension has changed a lot. Part of it, I guess, is the point I was going to make. Part of it because of the budget constraints. But—I don't like to say this, but I don't think Extension will ever again be the way it—the 1950s, those were the boom years in California. The state plan for master—or higher education, master plan for higher education was adopted. The state water plan was adopted. We had—we thought some of the best highways in the country, the best schools, and the University of California was this—there wasn't any question that we worked for the premiere public higher education in the world. Where there were Nobel Prize winners or the Berkeley library or agriculture research. But that has—that's all slipped, primarily because of budget. When I was a student at Davis, the state provided our education. We had to pay for room and board and our medical insurance, but quite frankly, I had saved for my 4-H projects to go to college, and I had as much money and I worked—and I didn't work when I was a student. I worked during the summers and the Christmas vacation, but I ended up with as much money in the bank when I finished school as when I started school. I don't know how

people finish school, how they buy a house unless it's—you know, these days. The University of California is still great, but it's—you know, it serves a lot more students than it used to, too. But Extension is changing. They don't have as—they're not replacing—they're not able to replace advisors in the county. I think in some of the—of course, the bigger users of our information can access the University directly. Don't have to go through the county office to, so they don't—

02-00:31:05

Li: Right. So perhaps the role of Extension is changing?

02-00:31:10

Rendell: Changing, um-hmm.

02-00:32:12

Li: All right. Well, is there anything else that you—

02-00:31:14

Rendell: I think not.

02-00:31:16

Li: All right.

02-00:31:18

Rendell: This may be a function of getting old. But it's—the thing that really strikes me is how young our country and our institutions are. That's why I wanted to make the point about Art Campbell going back to the time when really Extension started in the county.

02-00:31:39

Li: Right. It's not that long ago.

02-00:31:40

Rendell: No. And when—

02-00:31:45

Li: Yes.

02-00:31:48

Rendell: I don't know how to say this, but my mother was born in 1892, so there's been more time since she was born for our country than before it. You know, that kind of makes us pretty young, I think, just as a country.

02-00:32:06

Li: Yes.

[End of Interview]

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