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Lloyd-Ricks-Watson Project

Oral History

Dr. Charles Sappington

April 20, 2012

Interviewer: Dr. Mike Ballard

[Edited on 10/17/2012]

(Tape Side One, 000)

Dr. Ballard: This is an interview in the Echoes of Lloyd-Ricks-Watson Series. The interviewee is Charles Sappington. The date is April 20th, 2012. The interview begins at 10 a.m. The interviewer is Mike Ballard. Location of the interview is the Stennis-Montgomery room of Mitchell Memorial Library on the MSU campus. Well, we're talking with... is it Doctor?

Dr. Sappington: Yeah.

Dr. Ballard: Dr. Charles Sappington this morning, and we appreciate you participating.

Dr. Sappington: Thank you.

Dr. Ballard: ...in this project, and I know Vance will appreciate you coming in. And he has some very brief questions, but you can elaborate as you see fit.

Dr. Sappington: Alright.

Dr. Ballard: It's up to you; but the first one is what is your... or I guess I should say what *was* your relationship to the Lloyd-Ricks-Watson Building?

Dr. Sappington: Well, it was the headquarters of the Dean and all that when I was a student, and all of the Ag was headquartered in there. Then after I left Ripley, where I was Assistant County Agent, I came here I think in 1963 in the Extension Information

Department, and that was in Lloyd-Ricks on the top floor. And after that I became the state leader for 4-H programs, and that was down on the second floor. And we were kind of growing as a group and somewhere after that, and I don't remember the date, we moved our whole department over to Montgomery Hall on the second floor there.

Dr. Ballard: Mm-hm.

Dr. Sappington: So that's the time I was there.

Dr. Ballard: What do you remember about the building? Was it well-heated and well-cooled and ... (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: Well, actually it was pretty well cooled when I came. Before then it didn't have an air conditioner. I think maybe one or two years before they had put some room air conditioners in. So it was pretty good.

Dr. Ballard: It wasn't too bad?

Dr. Sappington: It wasn't bad at all.

Dr. Ballard: What about elevators, did you have...

Dr. Sappington: It had an elevator.

Dr. Ballard: Good.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, and you need one if you're on the third floor (*laughs*)...

Dr. Ballard: (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: ...Or was that the fourth floor... anyway, the top one.

Dr. Ballard: So how were the offices laid out? Were they kind of... were they big enough?

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, they...

Dr. Ballard: ...it didn't... it wasn't too crowded or anything?

Dr. Sappington: No, I shared an office with someone from a different department even, so we were a little crowded at times. But it wasn't any problem.

Dr. Ballard: Well, you've already... and when did you retire?

Dr. Sappington: Well, let's see... 1987 I believe it was.

Dr. Ballard: So you were there a pretty good while.

Dr. Sappington: Oh, I was moved out of there before then.

Dr. Ballard: Okay. You'd moved into Montgomery before then?

Dr. Sappington: Yeah.

Dr. Ballard: Okay.

Dr. Sappington: And then we went from there over to the Bost Building.

Dr. Ballard: Mm-hm; yeah. Well, this is where you can have some fun. You were talking about some of the people you knew over there, and the personalities, and the little anecdotes, and any funny stories you can remember about the people that were there (*laughs*). I know Dr. Wise and Rodney Foil and a lot of people were in...

Dr. Sappington: They were in the other side...

Dr. Ballard: Yeah. They were in the same general area. And Bill Fox, I don't know if you remember Bill or not...

Dr. Sappington: Oh yeah.

Dr. Ballard: But just... just carry on a conversation like if you'd be telling people about what you remember about the folks you worked with over there.

Dr. Sappington: Well, I don't remember a whole lot about that... I think... let's see... Dr. Bost was Director of Extension; he was on the second floor, and later he went over to the building, his namesake...

Dr. Ballard: Yeah.

Dr. Sappington: Let's see, Rodney Foil, I guess he was in there too but I don't remember where. But that'd be over on the other side from Extension.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah, right.

Dr. Sappington: But I was on the top floor, as I said, when I first came, but later, as I say, we were growing as an organization, so we moved down to the basement. And so I spent a little time down there in the basement, but I don't remember how many years.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah. Was Dr. Bost Head of Extension at that time?

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, he was.

Dr. Ballard: So did you interact with him very much, or was it...?

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, particularly after I became state 4-H leader. I was on the other end of Lloyd-Ricks from where his office was then.

Dr. Ballard: Well, that wasn't too convenient, was it? *(laughs)*

Dr. Sappington: *(laughs)* He could find you real quick. *(laughs)*

Dr. Ballard: Yeah. *(laughs)* Well what kind of work did you do with the 4-H?

Dr. Sappington: Well, I was leading the program statewide.

Dr. Ballard: So you just kind of coordinated it?

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, uh-huh. We had a staff that worked with the County 4-H Agents.

Dr. Ballard: Did you ever know that lady named Billie Nowlin?

Dr. Sappington: Billie Nowlin; yes I did.

Dr. Ballard: Tell us about her, 'cause I remember her, but ...

Dr. Sappington: I didn't know her real well 'cause I didn't work directly with her. But I remember her as a very nice person. She was the secretary for, I guess, the College of Agriculture, wasn't she?

Dr. Ballard: I think so.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, I think that's what she was.

Dr. Ballard: Rodney Foil said she kept up with everything and everybody. (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: (*laughs*) She probably did. She was a really nice person.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah...

Dr. Sappington: She was interested in everybody.

Dr. Ballard: She was. I remember meeting her, and she was a character.

Dr. Sappington: I think I knew her even after she'd retired for a little while. I had a son that lived near her; like almost next door, you know, to where she lived. So I think I saw her every now and then there.

Dr. Ballard: Well, you said you had to share an office for a while; who did you share with?

Dr. Sappington: Well, it was next door to the Poultry office.

Dr. Ballard: Okay.

Dr. Sappington: Then they sent an Entomologist in there to whip me. Gosh, I can't for the life of me remember his name right now, but...

Dr. Ballard: That's alright.

Dr. Sappington: ...He was there for a while; we shared an office.

Dr. Ballard: Well Rodney said something and I've been asking other people to comment on this. He said Extension and MAFES were both kind of territorial and so there wasn't too much... (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: (*laughs*)...There wasn't too much overlap between the two...

Dr. Ballard: There wasn't too much interaction in there?

Dr. Sappington: Originally I think the basement area was the Experiment Station, I think...

Dr. Ballard: Mm-hm.

Dr. Sappington: ...And then as we kind of started growing I think they moved some of us in that area too.

Dr. Ballard: Were there ever any classes taught in that building? Or was it strictly administrative?

Dr. Sappington: It was pretty much administrative, but there might have been some special classes; night classes or something like that.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah, I hadn't even thought about that, but then I got to wondering it was true 'cause the few times I went in there I was going to see somebody, you know, and I wasn't... I used to go see Bill Fox every now and then 'cause he was a Civil War enthusiast. (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: Was that after he became Dean?

Dr. Ballard: Yeah.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, okay. Because his office originally wasn't in there, I don't think. But it was off in another building, or that's what I was thinking...

Dr. Ballard: No, no it wasn't. He moved in there.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, I knew him pretty well too. I worked for a program for a while after I retired that was in Lloyd-Ricks.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah.

Dr. Sappington: And he was down the hall from us.

Dr. Ballard: Well, can you think of any other people that you knew over there that you... you don't have to say anything bad about them, now, but just...

Dr. Sappington: *(laughs)*

Dr. Ballard: ...We're looking more for personalities, what kind of personalities they had, and what they did, and...

Dr. Sappington: I can't really think of anything that would be interesting to anybody *(laughs)*...

Dr. Ballard: *(laughs)* Well, you never know now.

Dr. Sappington: Well, I knew a lot of people. Some of their names have slipped, but I'd recognize them by face now...

Dr. Ballard: Yeah.

Dr. Sappington: ...But I probably couldn't call their name.

Dr. Ballard: What about Vance? Did you...?

Dr. Sappington: He came... I don't think he was originally in that building.

Dr. Ballard: No, I don't think so either.

Dr. Sappington: I think his office was somewhere else in the Agronomy Department.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Sappington: I remember he developed that grass species or whatever...

Dr. Ballard: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Sappington: ...was really a good thing for people. And I never really knew him too well until later years.

Dr. Ballard: What kind of hours did you have to keep over there? Was it an eight to five or just eight 'til you get the job done?

Dr. Sappington: Whatever that was needed.

Dr. Ballard: Whatever's necessary?

Dr. Sappington: But it was pretty much eight to five unless you were out on the road travelling, and we travelled a good bit.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah. Did you have... like, did you have to go to every county? Or...

Dr. Sappington: Well, I think I made every county except one. *(laughs)*

Dr. Ballard: *(laughs)*

Dr. Sappington: So yeah, we went to a lot of counties.

Dr. Ballard: So your job obviously was a lot of outreach then.

Dr. Sappington: Yes, uh-huh.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah. Well, I was trying to think of some of those other names; I didn't bring the list with me. *(laughs)* Vance made a list and said, 'See if they want to comment on these people.' But a lot of people haven't, you know, I mean...

Dr. Sappington: I don't know...

Dr. Ballard: ...They see a name on it and say, 'Well I can't remember much about him.'
(laughs)

Dr. Sappington: *(laughs)*

Dr. Ballard: ...Or her. What about our current President? Did you ever run into him when he was a student over there?

Dr. Sappington: No. Actually, he started to work for Extension and we got into a bad budget year...

Dr. Ballard: Yeah.

Dr. Sappington: ...And he transferred over to the Experiment Station then. So he worked for Extension just a little while I think. And I didn't ever really know him.

Dr. Ballard: Actually I do have some names on this page. What about Dorothea Dickens? Now she goes way back.

Dr. Sappington: I really, I don't think I knew her.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah, she was... Dr. Giles, President Giles, did you...

Dr. Sappington: Oh yeah, uh-huh; yeah. He was in charge of the Division of Agriculture before he became President, I believe that's right; I'm pretty sure it is.

Dr. Ballard: Now I know some of the people in Extension and MAFES too, I guess; some of them taught in addition to like what your job was. How did that work? Did they... were they assigned teaching as extra work, or was it part of their job description, or...?

Dr. Sappington: No, not while I was working. That came later.

Dr. Ballard: Okay.

Dr. Sappington: I mean some of us taught, but it was at night or...

Dr. Ballard: Yeah.

Dr. Sappington: ...On other off hours; and not many of us did that I don't think.

Dr. Ballard: What about Baker Andrews? Do you remember him?

Dr. Sappington: I remember him, but I can't remember much about him. (*laughs*)

Dr. Ballard: (*laughs*) Yeah, I met him a long... What about Dean Bunch?

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, I remember him. He lived across the street from me for a while; a real nice family.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah. He... We interviewed him and he's... what is it... 97 years old? (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: Is he that old?

Dr. Ballard: But his memory's pretty good, you know.

Dr. Sappington: I bet it is.

Dr. Ballard: He's been around here a long time.

Dr. Sappington: He has.

Dr. Ballard: What about Verner Hurt?

Dr. Sappington: Verner Hurt. Well, he was down the hall from me when I was working on that other program at the end.

Dr. Ballard: Mm-hm.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, I knew Verner well.

Dr. Ballard: Did you have to... I know I've been here going on 30 years... Did you like meetings? I always hated meetings. (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: (*laughs*) Meetings? Not really, but we had a lot of them.

Dr. Ballard: You did have a lot of them.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah.

Dr. Ballard: Yeah. And did that include the whole Extension group or just your section or both?

Dr. Sappington: Both. Also there was an administrative supervisor staff meeting every month with *Extension*.

Dr. Ballard: Extension, okay. Clarence Dorman, did you know him?

Dr. Sappington: Clarence Dorman...

Dr. Ballard: He was Forestry I think, I don't... You know, there's a building named after him down here...

Dr. Sappington: Oh yeah, okay. I know who you're talking about. But I don't think I ever knew him.

Dr. Ballard: Mmm...

Dr. Sappington: Forestry...

Dr. Ballard: Go ahead.

Dr. Sappington: Go ahead... I was going to say Forestry was in another building as I recall.

Dr. Ballard: What about Dale Hoover? I don't...

Dr. Sappington: Dale Hoover...

Dr. Ballard: Now he was in Agronomy apparently.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah, I think he was in charge of Agronomy, wasn't he?

Dr. Ballard: I think so, yeah. Yeah; former Head, Department of Agronomy.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah. Mm-hm.

Dr. Ballard: It says that was the first department to offer a Doctoral degree on campus.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah. It probably was.

Dr. Ballard: Well, we appreciate this one name you gave us. You got anybody else you think we ought to talk to that you can remember?

Dr. Sappington: (*laughs*) No, not right offhand. That one, I think she might be able to give you a... She worked in that building for a long time in the Extension Information Department. And so she...

Dr. Ballard: Who headed that up back in those days?

Dr. Sappington: Dewayne Rosencranz.

Dr. Ballard: Is he still living?

Dr. Sappington: He's dead.

Dr. Ballard: Oh. Well...

Dr. Sappington: And his wife is.

Dr. Ballard: I'll put him down anyway.

Dr. Sappington: Yeah. He was the one that hired me.

Dr. Ballard: Well, that's interesting.

Dr. Sappington: When I came to Starkville...

Dr. Ballard: Yeah.

Dr. Sappington: ...to be in the Information Department.

Dr. Ballard: Did you get your degrees here, or?

Dr. Sappington: I got a Master's here and a PhD from Florida State.

Dr. Ballard: Okay. Well, that's good to know. Anything else you want to add?

Dr. Sappington: I don't think of anything.

Dr. Ballard: We've done just about right.

Dr. Sappington: Okay.

Dr. Ballard: We've done well. (*laughs*)

Dr. Sappington: Good. Thank you.

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