
INTERVIEW WITH J. RANDY WINTER, PROFESSOR OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

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ELAINE GRAYBILL: This is June 19th, 2007, and I'm interviewing J. Randy Winter in the Ropp Agriculture Building at Illinois State University. My name is Elaine Graybill, coordinator of the Illinois State University Oral History Project, for which this interview is being conducted. Dr. Winter is professor of agricultural economics, who joined the Illinois State University faculty in 1981. He was agriculture department chairperson from 1993 to 2004 and was instrumental in the 2001 relocation of the university farm from Gregory Street to Lexington, Illinois. Well, Dr. Winter, I have some questions for you now. What year were you born?

J. RANDY WINTER: 1955.

GRAYBILL: And where were you born and raised?

WINTER: I was born and raised in southern Illinois, actually born in Murphysboro in Jackson County. Grew up on a family farm in Perry County. Pinckneyville was our mailing address.

GRAYBILL: And I'm going to interrupt, and this will be in the transcript, but I'm making a word list of all the proper names so that we can do indexing when this is over.

WINTER: Okay.

GRAYBILL: I meant to explain that to you before we started.

WINTER: Sure. No problem.

GRAYBILL: And what did your parents do for a living?

WINTER: My parents were farmers, very traditional what we'd call a family farm, a very modest size. They raised six children on a family farm. My mother was a homemaker, as they would say in those days, so she did not work off the farm. Dad and our family has a long tradition of farming.

GRAYBILL: Can you tell me their names?

WINTER: My dad's name is Lyle, and my mother goes by Debbie. That's not her official first name, but she doesn't like her official first name. [Laughs.]

GRAYBILL: When did you marry and where, and what is your wife's name and what is her occupation?

WINTER: Okay, I was married in 1976. My wife is Carol. Maiden name was Ryterski. What was the rest of the question? Oh, what does she do?

GRAYBILL: What is her occupation?

WINTER: She is a registered nurse. She works for BroMenn Healthcare, and so she gets to drive all over the county, taking care of people after they've had surgery. She also works in the hospice area, helping people making a transition, folks who are terminally ill, a very difficult job.

GRAYBILL: I'm sure it is.

WINTER: You have to be kind of special to deal with that.

GRAYBILL: I'm sure. Well, how many children do you have?

WINTER: We have three children. Valerie is our oldest. She's 31. She's married to Dan Waldschmidt. They have two boys. Nathan is eleven, and Jacob is five.

Our middle child is Michael. He is 25. He lives here in Bloomington-Normal. He's an assistant manager at Panera [Bread]. At the end of this summer, however, he is preparing to move to Florida, just to follow a dream of his. He's always wanted to live there.

Our youngest child is Stephanie. She is 23. Stephanie is currently serving in the Peace Corps, so she is in the Dominican Republic, has been there since this past February, and her total term as a volunteer there 27 months.

I guess as an interesting aside, all three of my children have degrees from Illinois State University, not that we necessarily pushed them to attend Illinois State. In fact, in a couple of cases we suggested that getting out of town and going somewhere else might be better, but for whatever reason, they were all drawn to Illinois State University.

GRAYBILL: So you have a whole family of Redbirds, huh?

WINTER: A whole family of Redbirds.

GRAYBILL: And what about your grandchildren? Do you think they'll be doing the same?

WINTER: Time will tell. Time will tell. We're not pushing them to do that. Obviously, as an employee of the University I had a tuition break, so there were limitations on where we would encourage our children to go, but it wasn't limited to Illinois State.

GRAYBILL: Please describe your educational background and teachers who influenced you.

WINTER: Okay. Well, I went to a parochial school, raised Catholic, and so at that time nuns were still very predominant, and so that was an education that emphasized discipline (I'll say it that way) a great deal, but I think it was an education that served me very well. I always felt like students coming out of our parochial school were very well prepared as we went into the high schools. High school in

Pinckneyville. Maybe my first teacher who really influenced me was at the high school level, probably not unusual with people with agricultural backgrounds to say that one of the people that really influenced them was their high school ag teacher. And that was my case as well, a gentleman by the name of Louis Templeton.

And I think the thing that really struck me when I was a junior—he actually approached me and asked my opinion about the curriculum and things that were being offered and whether or not I felt that those were beneficial. I was just very impressed and actually quite honored that he would seek out my opinion.

Went to college at Southern Illinois University. Got my undergraduate degree in what they called agricultural industry, which essentially was the precursor of agribusiness, one of our largest programs here at Illinois State. Again, a teacher there who influenced me was my farm management instructor, a fellow by the name of Ron Hanson. Ron Hanson is now a faculty member at Nebraska, and actually is nationally renowned as a speaker, talking about family farm issues and relationships and that sort of thing. His teaching style just kind of touched me and kind of led me to believe that I had made the right choice in seeking that degree. And I've tried to kind of model some of my teaching and my future on what I learned from him.

From there I spent a year at Purdue University, starting my master's degree. Met another faculty member who had a big impact on my life, Jim Whittaker. He was my major professor there at Purdue. We had outlined a research project. He was originally from the state of Oregon, and he had an opportunity to return west. He took a faculty position at Oregon State University. And one day I was just visiting with him as he had made that decision, and he said, "Randy, why don't you come west?"

And so I went home and visited with my wife about that and asked her how she felt about moving to Oregon, and she said, "Okay, let's do it." And so that's actually what led me to Oregon State University, where I finished my master's degree and got my Ph.D. in ag economics.

GRAYBILL: I wondered what had taken you west.

WINTER: And so it was, you know, "Let's go west, young man." That was a move that we never regretted, a chance to live in a different part of the country, a very beautiful part of the country. We were out there for about four years, and quite frankly, if it wasn't for the fact that all of our family was in the Midwest, we would have seriously considered staying out there.

GRAYBILL: Well, it is beautiful out there, I know.

WINTER: It was fantastic living there in the Willamette Valley, where Oregon State is located. Basically you're an hour from the Pacific Ocean if you go west. If you go east for an hour, you're in true, real mountains, the Cascade Mountains. And so obviously, being from Central Illinois, you know, having those two things within an hour's drive was just phenomenal.

GRAYBILL: Well, then, explain why you came back to Illinois State. I think you've already indicated why, but—

WINTER: Yes, as I alluded, obviously our family was here. At that time, we had just the one child, and of course she was growing up away from all of her family and her grandparents. Obviously, my background was Midwest agriculture, and ultimately that's kind of where I wanted to return. And so the fact that our family was here and our roots were here is really what drew us back.

GRAYBILL: Tell me what the agriculture department was like at Illinois State when you came as a young faculty member, and I have some sub-questions here that I'd like to just lay out right now. Who was the chairperson, and how many faculty, and what kind of diversity was there on the department's faculty, and was there any diversity among the students?

WINTER: Okay. A long list of questions. Let's take a shot at that.

GRAYBILL: Okay.

WINTER: In 1981—of course, here in the Midwest we were coming out of a decade that had been quite exciting for agriculture. The 1970s are often looked back on as a very profitable decade. Land values increased dramatically. Commodity prices were quite high for a number of those years. And as a consequence of those good times, a lot of students were looking at agriculture as a career. So in 1981, '82, right around there is when the student enrollment in this department actually was at its highest ever. We had more than 400 majors at that time. Of course, the 1980s were not so kind to agriculture, a theme that kind of continues throughout today as we talk about Department of Agriculture. We are strongly tied to the agriculture economy, and as it does well, our enrollment tends to increase, and when the economy is a little soft, our enrollment tends to decrease, so we are fairly cyclical, and it's driven very much by that economy.

In 1981 the chairman of the department was George Forgey. He was actually very close to the end of his tenure. He was instrumental in the construction of this building where we're sitting, the Ropp Ag Building, a time in the state's economy when new construction on universities was almost nonexistent. And so the story, as I understand it, is in order to get this building, Dr. Forgey had to push fairly aggressively. He felt that once that was completed, that he might have burned enough bridges that he took that as an opportunity for him to retire.

The size of the department faculty-wise was very similar to what we have today. The background of the faculty has changed a little bit to reflect changing times, but as far as the actual number of faculty, it's very similar to what we have today, twelve, thirteen full-time faculty members, something on that order.

Very little diversity. We had two women on the faculty. One of those was a parttime instructor; one, full time. The rest were white males. As far as student diversity, the majors in our department historically are from Midwestern agricultural backgrounds, a lot of what we would call farm kids, predominantly white, heavily oriented towards male, although we have a significant number of females particularly interested in animal science and horticulture, in those particular areas. Actually, in the early eighties, because of the oil boom that was going on in Africa, we had a fair number of African students, who were being supported by their governments to come to the U.S. and pursue degrees.

GRAYBILL: Really? Do you remember what countries in particular they were from?

WINTER: Oh, I want to say we had several from Nigeria. I think we had some from Ethiopia, one who actually is somewhat well-known on this campus. I'll probably butcher his last name, but Taye Woldishiache... Woldishmiate?

GRAYBILL: Woldesmiate?

WINTER: Yes, okay.

GRAYBILL: He's in Politics and Government now.

WINTER: Yes.

GRAYBILL: Okay.

WINTER: He actually has an undergraduate degree from Agriculture.

GRAYBILL: Okay.

WINTER: That part gets overlooked quite a bit. Went on and got his graduate degree in politics and was known nationally because of—I guess he was imprisoned for political reasons for quite a while. After some period of time of course was freed, and he's actually here back on campus, serving a sabbatical or as a visiting scholar or something right now.

GRAYBILL: Okay. Well, that's interesting to bring him up. I hadn't realized he had an ag degree.

WINTER: Yes.

GRAYBILL: And that's how he came through the program [cross-talk; unintelligible]?

WINTER: I believe that's initially how he got here.

GRAYBILL: Okay, that's very interesting.

WINTER: He was in actually one of the very first classes I taught on this campus.

GRAYBILL: Really!

WINTER: And Taye was in that class.

GRAYBILL: Okay. Well, moving on a few years, please describe what it was like for you and your colleagues in 1992 when the Illinois Board of High Education recommended that the Agriculture Department be eliminated as part of their PQP [Priorities, Quality, Productivity] plan? And who was chairperson at that time, and what kind of responses did that announcement elicit in the department?

WINTER: The chairman at that time was Reginald Henry. Of course, as a department we were certainly shocked and dismayed by that recommendation.

Obviously, the recommendation to eliminate a department is going to back you up a little bit, but the other thing that really I guess bothered us about that whole process is the Board of Higher Education in their PQP process had essentially commissioned each university to conduct a review of their programs and to talk about their priorities and make recommendations for changes. And before the universities had an opportunity to complete that exercise, the state came out with their so-called “hit list.” Of course, we were on it.

So not only the fact that we were on that list but just the way it was handled, I think really kind of upset us. This was not, in fact, the first time in our history that this department had been recommended for elimination. I don't recall the exact years. I want to say 1971 or thereabouts—the president of the University at that time was Dr. David Berlo, and he had—of his own volition, one day just announced his intent to eliminate the ag department.

GRAYBILL: I didn't realize that.

WINTER: Yes. That's a little-known fact. In that case and again in 1992, with the IBHE [Illinois Board of Higher Education] recommendation, we're happy to say that the agricultural industry and the community really rose to our defense. Obviously, here in Central Illinois, this is the heart of agriculture country. Agriculture is the real foundation of the economy, not just in McLean County but in Central Illinois, in fact the state of Illinois. And so it's a little bit shocking to see those kinds of recommendations to eliminate an industry, an educational area that we think is so foundational to us. The charter of Illinois State University, in fact the original land that was granted for this University, came with the provision that agriculture be part of the University's educational offerings.

So there's a long history and roots and ties to agriculture, and certainly we think it ought to be here. In many ways, the IBHE recommendation caused us to lose a year, because we really spent a year with—a lot of our energy, a lot of our emotion, a lot of our time was devoted to refuting the arguments and the recommendation that was made by the IBHE.

On the positive side, it really made us kind of take a step back, think about our mission, think about what we do and how we do it, think about our role in the University, think about our role in the community, think about our role in the state, and kind of refocus our objectives and what we do.

It also gave our students who were here at that time an opportunity to really think about their commitment to Illinois State University and the Department of Agriculture. While certainly our faculty, certainly the University's administration was very supportive, we had students who played a very active role in refuting some of the arguments that were raised, and in fact creating—the word escapes me, but they essentially had a group of students who went to Springfield and essentially protested the recommendation of the IBHE in a public way.

GRAYBILL: Really. Do you remember any of their names?

WINTER: Scott Lay, who is well known in this community.

GRAYBILL: Yes.

WINTER: Actually on the Unit Five school board now. I believe he's actually the chairman of the school board at this time. Was one of our students at that time and one of the leaders in kind of organizing that protest.

GRAYBILL: How was it that you became department chair the following year, and what was the state of that controversy at the time you became chair?

WINTER: I guess somewhat like getting the Ropp Ag Building maybe burned out Dr. Forgey a little bit, I suppose that the IBHE recommendation may have burned out Dr. Henry a little bit in fighting that, so— not that he was driven to retire or anything, but I think he made the decision that he was ready to move on. And so we were actually conducting a national search for a new chairman. We had two internal candidates who were interviewed for that position; we had two external candidates who were also selected for interviews.

Some of my colleagues had encouraged me to apply. It was somewhat with mixed emotions that I did that. I considered myself at that time to be quite young to be a department chairman. The prospect in many ways was exciting but also very intimidating. But with their encouragement, I threw my hat in the ring, was selected for an interview and ultimately of course selected for the position.

The IBHE recommendation at that time had pretty well been laid to bed. We had overturned their recommendation. There were some modest changes in the structure of our department. We had a cooperative master's program with the University of Illinois that in fact was eliminated as a result of all of that review and the recommendation. But other than that, the department very much remained intact. In spite of the stress and the time and effort that was devoted to defending the department from that attack, not a single faculty member left, although you can imagine when that recommendation came out that many people wondered whether or not they would have a job in a year's time. I supposed it's somewhat surprising that some folks did not in fact take that as an indication that it was time to move on somewhere else. But the faculty were 100 percent behind this department, and everybody pulled together to fight off that attack, and every one of them stayed here.

GRAYBILL: So it created a certain solidarity?

WINTER: It really did. Again, you know, not to look back and say, "Oh, it wasn't that great that that happened," but it did get everybody pulling together in the same direction. As I already mentioned, it got us to think very seriously about our mission and how we go about fulfilling that mission. It made us think seriously about the programs that we offer and whether or not those were the right ones, whether or not we should change them, whether or not we should add some other areas, and it really got us all pulling together. And so in many ways it did strengthen our department.

It also, to be fair, certainly had a significant impact on our enrollment. For the next couple of years, our enrollments declined fairly dramatically. Obviously, the fact that the state had recommended eliminating the department put you in a very difficult place to recruit students, and so we took a fairly significant decline in our student enrollment. Fortunately, then, once that was behind us we were able to recover, to a significant degree.

GRAYBILL: To what extent were you involved in the process that resulted in President Tom Wallace fighting the IBHE recommendation and ultimately helping to save the department, and did you know him well?

WINTER: Remembering that I was just one of the faculty members at that time, I did not really have a lead role in the process of refuting the IB HE arguments. I did have kind of an interesting linkage. One of the members of the IBHE at the time was actually from my hometown of Pinckneyville, so I did have kind of an in with one of the members and was able to use that to some advantage. But I am happy to say that this University administration, certainly led by President Wallace, really stepped forward and helped us fend off the recommendation of the IBHE. He was very vocal, very supportive. I personally don't think his ultimate relief of the University was strongly tied to that. I think that the same way that we were upset by the way the IBHE approached the PQP exercise—that is, coming out with their list before the universities had completed the exercise that they had charged us with—I believe upset the president as much as it did us. And I think he took umbrage at that approach and as a result was certainly a very vocal supporter as we tried to address that issue.

GRAYBILL: Do you think that Wallace's advocacy for the ag department either hurt or helped him politically during subsequent years?

WINTER: No, I think—President Wallace, of course, ran into some issues here on campus, but I believe that those were completely separate from his defense of the agriculture department and the whole PQP exercise. I just think there were some other issues that actually came to the front in that confrontation with the Academic Senate and faculty.

GRAYBILL: All right. Well, I'd like to talk about the relocation of the university farm to Lexington in 2001. And I'd like to just go through the sub-questions that I'd like to cover in our discussion of this.

WINTER: Okay.

GRAYBILL: Why was a new farm needed? How did the process begin? What was your role in the process? And please describe the roles of others who were major players in the acquisition of the new farm, including Senator John Maitland and Representative Bill Brady in the Illinois State legislature. And when and how did you become aware of the availability of the GROWMARK research farm in Lexington?

WINTER: Okay. In the late eighties and the early nineties, certainly the Bloomington-Normal community continued to grow, and particularly here around campus the new Normal [Community] West High School was built to the immediate west of our existing farm. Then the [Heartland] Community College Campus was built immediately to the north, and those two prominent structures I think also helped jumpstart some residential expansion in those areas of Normal. And so we began to see apartments and housing developments spring up and start closing in on the university farm.

So there was the whole issue of simply being surrounded by a city. Was certainly one of the things that we were noticing and knew that that was going to continue to present some challenges to us. We had been out at Gregory Street since the early sixties. The official move out there was '62 or '63, something

like that. Mostly of the original buildings were still there, and so they were becoming quite aged, obsolete, in many cases decrepit. And so our facilities were suffering. We knew that we were going to have to make some major investments. Obviously, the whole nature of agriculture, the scientific basis, the technological basis had changed a lot in those thirty years, and so buildings that at one time might have been considered state of the art were now very obsolete.

And so we take those two major themes and put them together and think: If we're going to make a major investment in new facilities, new structures, does it make sense to do it on Gregory Street, where we're seeing the encroachment of the community? And as we, as a faculty, as a department looked at that situation, we thought that it probably was an opportune time to think about relocation.

We had gone through relocation before. As I said, we had moved out there in the early sixties. Prior to that, the university farm was right where we're sitting, right here on Main Street. As the campus grew, they needed more land, and that was the impetus for moving the farm back in those days. It freed up all the space here that now has Turner Hall, Horton Field House, Hancock Stadium, Redbird Arena, the Ropp Ag Building, the football field. All of that was the university farm. And so the relocation at that time freed up land for other uses.

As we looked at relocating in the early nineties, we saw the same sort of thing, a hunger for that land. We recognized that that land had become very valuable for potentially other purposes, either for the University or for the community. And so rather than try to make a huge investment in facilities on that location, we started looking around. We started building a vision of what we would like a new farm to be, how big we thought it needed to be, what sort of facilities it should have, and we simply started shopping the county, looking for what we considered to be reasonable sites.

Of course, we were looking for open land but within a reasonable distance of the University, so obviously there are limitations on where you can go. And finding a single plot of land or even several plots of land close together of sufficient size is quite a challenge in a community like this.

But that's kind of how it all started. When I became chairman, I set that as one of my major goals. I knew it was going to be a huge undertaking, but I thought it was very important for our department as we wanted to grow and prosper in the coming years, so I set that out as one of my major goals as the chairman. In fact, it was a process—you say we moved in 2001. I think the dedication actually, if memory serves me, was 2002. But we have to recognize that was really a decade-long process, with all the planning, with all the special provisions that had to be put in place in order for us to accomplish that. It actually took special legislation from the State of Illinois in order for us to pull this off. We had to garner support within the college, with the University, within the community to convince people that it really made sense for us to do that. So we worked on it for a decade, truly. Truly, we did.

As we were shopping for potential locations, it was about that time that GROWMARK merged their research facilities with Land O'Lakes, and Land O'Lakes had a livestock research facility somewhere in the state of Iowa, and they decided to discontinue their livestock research at Lexington, and so here was a piece of land that already had a significant number of well-designed, research-oriented livestock buildings in place. Obviously, folks at GROWMARK knew that we had been looking for sites, and so as

they had made that decision, they notified us and said, "We would be interested in talking to you about selling that site to you."

The site certainly had some advantages. I've already mentioned the fact that it had a number of buildings already in place, buildings that had been designed for livestock and for research, obviously two important things for us. They had a real nice conference center up there, something that we did not have at the old farm, a place where we could really bring the public and feel good about bringing them to our location.

So those were the positive side. Certainly the acreage we felt was nearly what we needed. We added a little bit more land later. But those were the positive attributes. The negative attribute, no doubt, was the distance. There was some concern about that. It's about eighteen miles from our campus obviously, a little further than what we thought would be ideal. But as we kind of balanced the ledger, so to speak, the advantages and disadvantages, ultimately we came to the conclusion that we thought we could make that work. We purchased some vans so we can provide some transportation to students, and obviously that was one of the major concerns: how will the students get there?

Just as an aside, that has not really turned out to be a major problem. As I mentioned, we have some departmental vans. We offer transportation to students. Typically the first week or two of a semester, quite a few students take advantage of that service, and usually by the third week they've all figured out how they're going to get there on their own, and they carpool among themselves. And so it really has not turned out to be the problem that many people thought it would be. Obviously, it's right on Interstate 55, so even though it's eighteen miles away, when you think about the time element, it's just a little over twenty minutes to get here. It can take me twenty minutes to get from sitting here on campus, say, if I want to go to the Doubletree Hotel on the south side of town. That's twenty minutes. So when you put it in that context, that distance really has not turned out to be that big of an issue.

GRAYBILL: Well, that's good. What about Maitland and Brady? Were they major players, or were they just part of the general support for the legislation?

WINTER: Certainly they were very supportive. Senator Maitland has another piece of our history that perhaps is a little bit more important than the farm relocation. He was one of the leaders of an initiative to create what we call C-FAR, the Council on Food and Agricultural Research. That was officially created in 1993, and that was the first time that we had ongoing state support for research related to agriculture. And he really played an important role in getting that legislation passed. So that is, I would say, his stronger connection in supporting this department.

I mentioned that in order for us to move the farm, we had to have special legislation passed. Of course, Phil Adams here at the University helped us create that legislation and get it through the legislature. We had a couple of alumni who were in the General Assembly who actually sponsored that legislation. And, boy, right off the top of my head I'm going to struggle. I know one of them was Representative [Jay] Hoffman, I believe from Collinsville, and I can't recall the other sponsor right now. I guess we'd have to do a little research to verify that. But they actually sponsored the legislation.

And the purpose of that legislation was actually quite simple. We knew at that point in time that there was not going to be a state appropriation to give us the money that it would take to move our farm, to buy a new facility and to put up new buildings, and so one of the real challenges was how do you finance the relocation of this farm? In order to do that, we got special permission to sell a portion of our existing university farm and retain those proceeds, where by state law, normally if state property were sold, it would go into the state coffers in Springfield. And so that was the special legislation that allowed us to retain those funds.

So we sold 132 acres, which actually was located at the old Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home. That was prime development property. It sold on average for about \$37,000 an acre, so we raised just a little over \$5 million, and that was the funding source, then, to buy the GROWMARK property, to buy the additional 200 acres of the Zook Farm that we purchased to expand our operation up there, and also to finance the construction of all of our new buildings.

Many people might look at \$5 million and say that's a tremendous amount of money, and certainly in some respects it is, but when you talk about building structures, \$5 million really doesn't go very far with all the State Purchasing Act requirements and prevailing wage issues that make university construction fairly expensive. So I guess one of the things that I'm really proud of is I think how effectively and productively we were able to take \$5 million, secure 560 acres, a number of existing buildings and construct several other really, really nice buildings up at the new farm.

A number of people played important roles in all of this. Certainly I have to recognize our farm manager at the time, Russ Derango. Russ is still the farm manager today. He obviously played a very pivotal role as we thought about what a new farm should look like, what sort of facilities it should have, and the whole process of moving from one farm to another.

Another faculty member who really provided a great deal of leadership was Dr. Paul Walker. He helped in a lot of the design of the new buildings that were going up there, keeping an eye on the blueprints and making sure that everything was going the way it should.

Certainly, outside of our department a great deal of leadership from Dick Runner and his entire office in facilities planning as we had to go through that whole process including the sale of the 132 acres I referred to. That was an unusual thing for the University and kind of unique, and so their office really helped put that together and pull it off I thought very successfully, and of course then in the design of all the new facilities. And so we met with Dick Runner on a very regular basis. We got to know him quite well.

As I mentioned, this was really a ten-year process, and during that ten years we had changes in leadership on this campus. When we all started this, Betty Chapman was the dean of our college [College of Applied Science and Technology]. She was supportive from the beginning as we thought about the whole process and how we were going to do it and helped put that together. Larry Quane served as an acting dean for a couple of years. His support was there as well.

And then ultimately Robert Rossman came in towards the end as we actually executed the plan. Although his background certainly did not include agriculture in any way, he came on board. He was very supportive of what we were trying to accomplish and helped us really put the whole package together, so I certainly want to recognize his leadership.

At the same time, we were going through changes in presidential leadership. Dr. [David] Strand was president during part of that time, and he was supportive. But, again, as we got to the actual execution, we had a change, and Vic Boschini became president, again, a person with absolutely no agricultural background, but I'm happy to say he was very supportive of what we were trying to do, got behind us 100 percent and helped us really secure what we thought we needed to have a successful farm.

So those were a number of people who played very active roles and very positive, supportive roles in that whole process.

GRAYBILL: Was there much opposition to the new farm?

WINTER: You know, not that I ever encountered. One of the perhaps most controversial things that we had to deal with as we were moving—we had a dairy operation at our old farm on Gregory Street, and with \$5 million we simply could not afford to construct a new dairy, and so the decision was made to eliminate that in the price. Obviously, there were some people in the dairy industry who were dismayed with that decision. At various points in time, there was some talk about trying to get us to reverse that decision. I met with some of those folks. We just essentially kind of laid out the issues, the problems, the challenges that we were facing, explained the situation, and ultimately I guess they came around and saw that what we were doing was not necessarily what we wanted to do but is what we had to do. And so that was probably the area that maybe had the most resistance from some folks, but as I say, ultimately there was nothing really rancorous about that.

GRAYBILL: Please describe the farm as it is today and what types of activities are taking place there.

WINTER: All right. Well, as I mentioned, we had to eliminate the dairy in that relocation, but we were able to maintain a swine herd and in fact were able to significantly increase that operation, putting in new, state-of-the-art buildings, and so that is, in my opinion, one of the real centerpieces of the new farm, is the swine operation. We also maintain a beef operation. That's a cow-calf operation, including a feed lot, and we still have sheep.

As part of what was going on in the state at that time, as we were moving to a new farm, the University of Illinois was also thinking about a relocation of their south farm, and as they were going through very much the same process that we went through, thinking about priorities and cost and the whole process, they were contemplating cutting back on their sheep operation. Actually, as a result of this, we have now entered into a cooperative agreement with the University of Illinois, where we maintain the ewe flock; they utilize some of our lands for their teaching purposes, for their research purposes, and so I guess just as a little bit of an offshoot of this, we do see a little bit more cooperation between universities in the state, which I think is something the taxpayers always like to see.

GRAYBILL: Yes.

WINTER: So that's been a good relationship. We have certainly a cropping operation up there. Since we're sitting in Central Illinois, obviously corn and soybeans are our predominant crops. We also grow a fair amount of alfalfa because of our livestock herds and because of the beef needs for hay and silage. But those are our predominant enterprises.

One of the real advantages of the new farm is its location. I talked about the challenge of its location, being away from campus, and that certainly is the issue that I've already described. On the positive side, that farm sits right on Interstate 55 between us and Chicago, maybe more importantly between Springfield and Chicago, and so there are many, many of our state legislators, not to mention literally thousands of the public who drive by that facility on a daily basis. We consider that farm to really be a billboard for the entire University. In fact, we have a large sign right out by the interstate that indicates that this is the Illinois State University farm. We use that kind of as the banner to let people know that "you are now in Redbird country" as you were coming south from Chicago.

And so I think that facility certainly is great for the Department of Agriculture, for our recruitment of students, for our research, for our educational programs, for our relationships with the agricultural industry, but I think it's also very beneficial to the University at large.

GRAYBILL: I'm sure it is. You talked about recruiting, and I know that in the years preceding the relocation, the benefits of recruiting top students and also research funding were pointed out. To what extent has that happened?

WINTER: Yes, well, I certainly believe that the new farm has strengthened our ability to recruit students. Again, part of it is just the visibility, again just because it is right there on such an important road and, to me, a very impressive farm as you drive by it.

GRAYBILL: Yes, it is.

WINTER: So I think just that visibility certainly has some benefit on recruitment of students as well as faculty, which is a very critical part of a university. But the thing that I believe has emerged even more than that is our ability to attract some sizeable research grants because we now have facilities that are well designed, that have sufficient capacity to do quality research, and so that certainly has borne fruit.

The other thing that has really emerged, I think, with the new farm is the strengthening of our relationships with the agricultural industry, and a lot of that farm is being used by seed companies and by chemical companies as a testing ground. They use it for demonstration plots. They use our facility for a lot of field days, where they bring their employees and their customers in to see their products for educational purposes.

And, again, all of those things have flow-over benefits to our department. Again, part it is just visibility, getting a lot of different people on our facility so they know it's there; they have an idea of the capacity that we have, the value of those facilities. There's also certainly a financial angle to all of that, as those

companies support us financially. They donate a lot of our seed; they donate a lot of our fertilizer; they donate a lot of our chemicals, and so that helps the operation of the farm financially, without a doubt.

GRAYBILL: That sounds like a real benefit. Please describe the current and future use of the former farm on Gregory Street.

WINTER: The Gregory Street farm still remains, I guess we'll say, under the physical control of the Department of Agriculture. We still continue to farm that land. Again, part of it is used in research plots. A lot of it is simply used for general agricultural production to produce the feed that we need to feed all the livestock up at our farm.

As far as the long-term future, of course that's really not in our hands. We know that the University's long-range plan views that property as the really only place where the University can expand in any meaningful way, and so we are beginning to already see a little bit of that. A portion of that farm has been set aside as a nursery for our grounds department. In this coming year, there's going to be some of the first construction out there at that property. I believe there are going to be some new tennis courts built out there.

There's been talk about the Visitors' House that is going to be built by the University, and one of the rumors is that that will be located on part of the old Gregory Street farm. And so as we looked to the future, I think over time there will just be small pieces carved off to serve other priorities of the University. At this point in time, I know President Boschini and President [A] Bowman have both expressed the opinion that that land will not be sold off for development by the town but rather will be held as a valuable property for the use of the University, itself.

And so that's kind of the current status. We continue to farm it until we're told that, "No, you can't do that anymore." And so that's the status. It's year by year, and we just keep doing what we're doing until somebody tells us to stop.

GRAYBILL: That sounds good. Can you describe your Washington Agenda when you were chairperson?

WINTER: Back in those days, we were still involved in the aquaculture initiative. That was an intensive, indoor, recirculating aquaculture program. The Washington Agenda was supporting that program. We were receiving annual allocations, oh, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$150,000. Over a ten-year period, we received a little over \$1 million to support that initiative. That put up two buildings. That paid for the employees who were running that. It paid for a lot of the research that was going on. And that really was our Washington Agenda at that point in time.

That was another thing that, incidentally, of course we did not move when we went to the new farm. It was a research-oriented project. It had kind of run its course. It had fulfilled its objectives. It was not a commercial operation, and so from that respect, it didn't make sense to duplicate it. The only way to keep an operation like that would have been to expand it dramatically to try to make it a commercial operation, and that just didn't really seem to make sense for our mission and where we were headed, and so that was another piece actually that did not get moved when we went to the new farm.

GRAYBILL: What other major themes, changes or events were part of your time as department chair?

WINTER: Without a doubt, certainly the jewel is the new farm, as I look back on my tenure. And as I indicated, most of my eleven years as chair was spent very heavily invested in that process.

A couple of other things that happened that I'm fairly proud of—of course, we're sitting here in the Ropp Ag Building, in our new conference room, surrounded by our new offices, departmental offices and faculty offices. And so towards the end of my tenure, we had an opportunity to go through a major renovation of a portion of this building and relocate our department from Turner Hall to the Ropp Ag Building. I think our facilities are much better here. Our faculty basically are all in one location. It's easy for the public to associate: "Where is the Ag Department?" Well, it makes sense: We're in the Ag Building. Okay? And so I'm pretty proud of that.

Towards the very end of my tenure, we received approval to create a horticulture center as part of our horticulture program. It's part of the University program, actually. That Horticulture Center is now undergoing a slow and steady development. That's— actually a piece of the old university farm has been set aside for that. And so that is a significant positioning, I think, for the future. One of the areas in which our department is headed is towards what I would all a more consumer-oriented industry, as opposed to our historical roots, which were very producer-oriented. One of the major areas of that consumer-oriented industry is the green industry or horticulture. And so I think we are beginning to build what will also be another jewel for our department and for this University as that Horticulture Center continues to develop.

So those were all physical things. We went through a couple of major program reviews. As a result of that, we had some significant changes in our curriculum. I've already indicated kind of a move toward the consumer-oriented part of the industry, and we've added some elements that deal with what we call the food industry, as we say, closer to the consumer as opposed to producer oriented. And so, again, that is, as we look at the future, an area that I think will continue to grow in importance. And as we think about future faculty hires, I think we're going to see a shift in emphasis in that direction.

On the personnel side, of course I was in a position where I had my farm manager retire, and so I hired the new farm manager. Russ Derango has already been mentioned, who played a critical role in our relocation, and he's been doing a great job with the new farm. And quite frankly, I replaced about half of the faculty members in our department in an eleven-year period. Of course, educational institutions, education—it's all about people. I would like to say, if I can congratulate myself, that I made some very good hires, some extremely good, productive young faculty members.

One of our challenges is keeping those kinds of folks here, a little bit like basketball coaches, and when you have people who are very successful, they're sought after by other universities, and we've experienced that. Some of those young faculty members have been bid away by other universities. In many cases, it's because they've gone home. Just recently we lost two faculty members who were both Texas natives and went back to Texas. Unfortunately, that's not unusual. That draw for Texas is very strong. More recently, we've lost another one of our good, young faculty members, who is returning to his home state of Missouri.

And so oftentimes it's those kinds of elements that we really can't control here, and you're at the mercy of those kinds of backgrounds, and unfortunately you lose those faculty members. But it gives you an opportunity then to kind of reexamine your program, to reexamine your priorities, to ask whether this is an opportune time to move the department in a little bit different direction. And so, like all big things, there are both positives and negatives, and you deal with them.

GRAYBILL: You've talked about how the department became different during your eleven years as chair. In what other ways is the department different today than when you joined it in 1981?

WINTER: One of the things I think that's most significant, and it's not just the Department of Agriculture, it's really Illinois State University is the growing emphasis on research. When I came here as young faculty member in 1981, we had 100 percent teaching loads, 100 percent teaching expectations, and that's what we did. The positive side of that is it really puts the spotlight on students because it's all about teaching. As the University has moved to greater emphasis on research for faculty promotion, for tenure decisions, one of the negatives I think that that brings is that it focuses faculty attention on other things.

As an academic, certainly we recognize the importance of research, the importance of being invested in your academic area, of contributing to the public knowledge and that sort of thing, but I think we also have to admit that it detracts a little bit from our ability to focus 100 percent of our attention on students, and so I think one of the differences is that there is less—and "social" is probably not quite the right word, but in some cases it's a little bit less of a social relationship within a department. When you start talking about research, you have everyone with his or her own agenda, and I think our department is actually somewhat unique in that we have a great deal of collaboration among our faculty members in research, and so maybe it's less noticeable in our department than in others. But we still have to recognize that people in some ways are pulled in different directions, and it lessens our ability to emphasize relationships with students. I think that's one of the things that's happened not just in our department but campus wide.

GRAYBILL: How do you think the students are different today than they were in 1981?

WINTER: We still have, in this department, a significant percentage of our students who we would call "farm kids," students who come from a very strong agricultural background, much more so than a lot of people probably would think. When you look at the demographics in the U.S. and you say, well, 2 percent of the U.S. population lives on farms, in spite of that we still have a fairly strong rural agricultural kind of foundation of our students.

Having said that, certainly we are seeing a movement away from that, more students who are coming to us who are not from an agricultural background, who are more interested in what I'd call the consumer end of agriculture, dealing with the food companies, the Krafts of the world and the ADMs [Archer Daniel Midland] of the world.

I already mentioned the green industry in horticulture, an area that has grown through the years and I think has a lot of potential for additional growth in the future. Again, that's an area that's not our

traditional roots in agriculture. And so that's the direction that I see us going. We've already made some changes in our curriculum to help move the department in that direction. I think we will be making some hires with those specific objectives in mind as the opportunities arise in the future. And so I think our department will continue to shift in that direction.

GRAYBILL: Do you want to mention a few of your department's most outstanding graduates and what they're doing?

WINTER: Sure, I would love to do that. It's a little bit risky, of course, in picking out individuals, but we do have some folks who are, of course, very well renowned in this community, in the state and in fact nationally. I'll just pick out a few of them and mention them by name. And I'll start with let's call them our more mature alumni.

I want to mention Dan Kelley. Dan Kelley is the president and chairman of the board for GROWMARK, and I suspect that his leadership in GROWMARK didn't hurt us in the least as we thought about relocating our farm to their former research farm. Dan has also been very active in alumni relations. He was one of the leaders that helped create the Agriculture Alumni Association, which according to the historical record, was the first departmentally based alumni association on this campus. He served as one of the presidents of that association and then went on to serve at the University level, active on their alumni board, and I believe he may have also been the president of the University's alumni association.

Bill Kuhfuss is a fairly renowned Ag alumnus. He is I think the only Ag alumnus whose picture is in Bone Student Center as one of our distinguished alumni. He was renowned as the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. The American Farm Bureau Federation is the nation's largest general farm organization, and he served as its president. He was also one of the founding members of our Agriculture Alumni Association.

Ray Brownfield, again, active in our alumni association, and I guess that's a theme. We certainly feel one of the things that's unique about Agriculture is the strong tie that our alumni have to our department. But Ray Brownfield is currently serving as the president of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. That, again, is a very visible kind of position, and it makes me proud to see a Redbird leading a national organization like that.

Just as an aside, at this point in time Andy Brorsen is another ISU Ag alumnus, and he is the president of Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers [and Rural Appraisers], so it's kind of unique that in a relatively small agricultural department here at Illinois State University we have the current president of both the Illinois and national societies of farm managers. That always makes me proud because my teaching area happens to be farm management.

GRAYBILL: Oh, that's great.

WINTER: So I really love to see that kind of leadership. One other one I'll mention that's kind of that same vintage is Tom Andes. Tom Andes is obviously known on this campus. He was a member of the

Board of Trustees, and he was the first individual donor to give \$1 million to Illinois State University, and that \$1 million also established the first endowed chair at Illinois State University, and Tom is an ISU Ag alumnus.

GRAYBILL: Okay, great.

WINTER: I'll mention two of our younger alumni. Again, kind of dangerous to pick out just a couple of people, but I consider these to be two real up-and-comers, I think people who will become national leaders in their fields. One is Mark Kolkhorst. Mark works for ADM and was president of Tabor Grain. Of course, ADM is a major international agribusiness company. I think Mark is on kind of a fast track to become one of the real leaders in that organization, and so a person to kind of keep your eye on.

Another one I'll mention is John Mann. John is currently the leader of John Deere's Precision Agriculture Division. Precision agriculture is a field that has grown dramatically in the last decade, and I think its future is very bright, and John is one of the leaders in that industry, and so I think his future is also very bright. And, of course, John Deere [is] the leading agricultural machinery company in the U.S. and probably the world.

And so we have a couple of our kind of young alumni who are well positioned in leadership in those major companies. And I use them just as an indicator of the quality of some of our students.

GRAYBILL: That is truly impressive to have those people among your alumni. Please mention your own current research and outreach activities.

WINTER: I am heavily invested right now in renewable energy. As I was ending my tenure as chairman, we were working on a Washington Agenda item related to renewable energy and trying to create some new programs here on this campus related to that field, which of course, in my humble opinion right now, probably the hottest topic nationally is renewable energy: wind and ethanol and, to a lesser degree, solar and some of the other renewable industries.

One of the faculty members I mentioned that left, whom we lost to Texas, was the lead in our department on that particular project. He left to go to Texas about the time I was stepping down as chair, and so there was this kind of an opening, an opportunity, a void in that team that was working on renewable energy. And because I had been chair, I had been involved in a lot of the negotiations and a lot of the discussions, was fairly conversant and quite interested in the field.

And so I kind of stepped into that role, and I assumed that position on what here on campus is called the "wind team." The other members are Dave Loomis in the Department of Economics and [David] Kennell in the Department of Technology, and ultimately we were successful in getting a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, a four-year grant. We have just completed the first year of that. In two weeks from now, we will be offering our first statewide conference dealing with renewable energy, specifically wind energy. That is an outgrowth of that effort.

And so I am very heavily involved in that. As a part of that whole initiative, we are proposing to construct a small wind turbine and a solar array at our Horticulture Center, which I've already

mentioned. And so, again, it's a kind of collaboration between a couple of programs in our department. We think that that will be a great attraction for the public as they have an opportunity to visit these operating facilities and see, well, what does it really look like, what does it sound like, how productive is it, how much energy does it really produce? You know, those are all the questions that we hope to answer.

We have created an undergraduate major in renewable energy. That has gone through all the campus approvals. That program proposal is now sitting at the Illinois Board of Higher Education awaiting its last approval so that it can be officially offered, and we are hoping that that will be available beginning in the fall of 2008. As a part of that, we've created four new courses and put together a curriculum utilizing other courses on this campus, and I will be one of the people teaching one of those new courses for the first time this coming fall. So that's both exciting and a little bit daunting. Teaching a new course is always quite a challenge. But that's what my primary activities [are], related to that, and I'm really excited about the future of renewable energy.

The other thing that we are trying to do and we're negotiating, and hopefully in years to come we'll see the fruits of this negotiation, is to actually put some utility-sized turbines up at the university farm. Again, because of the visibility of that site, we think that would be a great opportunity not only to improve the image of the University and the farm and let people know about but, again, as an opportunity for people to access a utility-sized turbine up close and personal. You know, there's a really hot debate going on right now about those structures and what impact they have, both positive and negative, and we would like to be in a position to help the public have an opportunity to see for themselves what it is really like. So that's what we're hoping to do.

GRAYBILL: That's very exciting.

WINTER: We're excited about it.

GRAYBILL: What are other major achievements in your career that you have not yet mentioned?

WINTER: Oh, gosh, I think we really have covered the waterfront, I think. You know, we've talked about facility improvements, which is always a challenge on a university campus. I mentioned several that I'm quite proud of. Programmatic changes that we've initiated and will continue in the future that I think are moving our department in the right direction. And some personnel things—you know, hiring faculty, which is—when it's all said and done, the most important part of any academic department is their faculty.

I'm proud of what I did in all three of those areas, and that's where I am today. I have returned to the faculty, full-time teaching again, kind of back into that. One of the things I think I missed as department chair was reduced interaction with students, so it's good to get back into the classroom on a more frequent basis and get to know those students more.

I mentioned my involvement in farm management. I'm active in the Farm Managers Society, and I suppose one of the things that is most gratifying to me as a faculty member is to go to that industry-

based organization and see a lot of my former students who are out there in that industry, providing leadership, active in that industry, being successful, and to think, as a faculty member, maybe I had some small part in helping prepare them for their success. And I think that's why a lot of people become teachers. And that is truly gratifying.

GRAYBILL: That's really good. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

WINTER: I tell you, Elaine, I think we've really covered it.

GRAYBILL: Okay. Well, thank you so much, Randy. I'm going to turn off the recorder now.

WINTER: Okay.