

Interview with Jean Rothacher and Ted Dyrness, August 29, 1997, at 2:30 pm, by Max Geier. Performed at Jean Rothacher's home in Corvallis, Oregon.

In 1957 Jean Rothacher arrived at a home on Blue River Ranger Station compound with her husband, Jack, who was the leader of watershed research at the Andrews Forest. This was a crucial time in the history of relations between the research and land manager communities – the Blue River Ranger District was just up and running and the Rothachers became friends with Mike Kerrick and his wife, which helped bridge the two cultures.

Max Geier: I'm not sure how much Fred told you about what we're working on here.

Jean Rothacher: A little bit. [Wife of Jack Rothacher, early researcher at the HJA.]

Max Geier: In the way of orientation, I'm writing a book for the Andrews group on the [H.J.] Andrews Experimental Forest. I'm going back to the early origins, and one of the things to start off with, is my understanding that Jack Rothacher started working at the Andrews Forest about 1956, 1957 or so. I was wondering if you could start off by talking a little bit about his background up until that point. When you met him, and what his personal interests were at that time.

Jean Rothacher: You want to know his age and history, in other words. Well, I always liked that picture they took when they dedicated the forest in H.J. Andrews' name. You've seen it haven't you? It doesn't show his face, but it shows his nice straight back.

Ted Dyrness: Yep.

Jean Rothacher: That's the way he looked.

Max Geier: When did you meet him?

Jean Rothacher: When did I meet him?

Max Geier: Yeah.

Jean Rothacher: 1955, I think it was.

Max Geier: So, about two years before he started working at the Andrews.

Ted Dyrness: You were at Steamboat with him though, too, weren't you?

Jean Rothacher: I was in Seattle, and we lived in Shelton. We'd go into the Seattle mountain range and that's how I met him. Then we lived at Shelton just for that summer. Then, he got a job as a ranger at Steamboat on the North Umpqua River. We were only there a year-and-a-half. I don't think he liked being a ranger very much. He didn't like the responsibility of being responsible for people who were not responsible.

Ted Dyrness: I would imagine it would be a hard job.

Jean Rothacher: So, we were only there a year-and-a-half and his friend Jerry Dunford --

Ted Dyrness: Jerry Dunford [USFS hydrologist].

Jean Rothacher: -- Jerry Dunford, was at Portland at the time, and he talked Jack into coming to the experimental forest. So, we moved to the ranger station there [Blue River Ranger District Station and adjacent facilities in Blue River, Oregon].

Max Geier: That was about 1957, roughly. When he decided to take the job there, what were his reasons? Why did he decide to take that position?

Jean Rothacher: Because he liked the idea of research forestry better than being in the regular Forest Service and being a ranger. He wasn't in charge of a whole district.

Max Geier: Did you take trips down there beforehand, to see the sights and what was going on?

Jean Rothacher: I don't remember. I don't think I had ever seen the river [McKenzie] before, but he probably did. I just don't remember.

Max Geier: Do you recall your first impressions when you went down there?

Jean Rothacher: I thought it was a lot neater than the North Umpqua, with the road which went into Roseburg. A little farther away, a little less-civilized. Our main town for shopping was Eugene. The houses were better kept and it was closer for getting into the recreational areas.

Ted Dyrness: The houses were fairly new when you moved into it? [Blue River]

Jean Rothacher: The houses were brand new. They had just set up the ranger station there, and the house was new. We moved into one of the ranger houses. Then, they built another couple across the road from those, and one was designated for the forester-in-charge of the Andrews. I don't think there had been anyone in charge of the Andrews before, I'm not sure. I think he was the first. I knew he was the first one in the house.

Ted Dyrness: Yes, because before that, the Andrews was kind of administered from here in Corvallis.

Jean Rothacher: Yeah.

Ted Dyrness: People like Bob Ruth and Jerry Franklin and some undergraduates, went to the Andrews to do the stream measuring work and so on. But, I think it's right that Jack was the first resident-in-charge.

Jean Rothacher: Yeah, but the first summer [1957] we were there, he had a college assistant who lived in a trailer above our house. That was Jerry Franklin.

Max Geier: Jerry, he lived with you for a while didn't he, in your house?

Jean Rothacher: No, he always lived in the trailer house up on top [Elevated area behind Blue River RD Station that Franklin and others tagged, "Blue River Heights."]

Ted Dyrness: Was that trailer house new that summer, also?

Jean Rothacher: Could have been.

Ted Dyrness: That was the silver one, 35 ft. long, 8 ft. wide, the one we all stayed in. Then one summer, the Wollums were in there. Remember Art Wollum and Karen? [Art Wollum was PNW Station scientist who did first soil survey off the HJA EF.]

Jean Rothacher: I have a vague. . .

Ted Dyrness: He was doing some soil work on the watershed.

Jean Rothacher: I'm not sure. I think it was.

Ted Dyrness: I think it was.

Jean Rothacher: I don't remember Art living there. And I can't remember whether Harry [possibly Jerry Franklin, and she just misspoke] --

Max Geier: Gratkowski Was that Hank? Was that who you were talking about?

Jean Rothacher: The what?

Max Geier: The person "Harry," would his name be Hank Gratkowski? [Gratkowski was at HJA EF in early years with Roy Silen, but was gone by 1957 when Rothacher arrived.]

Jean Rothacher: I don't know. I don't ever think he worked for Jack.

Max Geier: So, the person that Jack interacted mostly with would be, except for you obviously, would be Jerry Franklin, his student.

Jean Rothacher: Jerry, the student? But, he was always going back-and-forth to and from Corvallis. When we moved here, it was the other way around. They went back-and-forth to the Andrews.

Max Geier: When did you move here in Corvallis?

Jean Rothacher: 1961.

Max Geier: 1961, wow. So, a crew of them were down there at Blue River; what do you recall about your interaction with the community there?

Jean Rothacher: The community? I was reasonably active. I belonged to the "extension" group which was on the McKenzie River. It wasn't necessarily on the Blue River, in fact, I helped get another group of them, extension people, started at OSU. I'm sure because so many people were moving up there for Cougar Dam. [To work building Cougar Dam] They were looking for housing, would take any old shack and pay horrible prices for it. There were so many of them we couldn't accommodate them all. So, we started another extension group and we took some courses at the University of Oregon at night. We took a couple, one of them on the geology of Oregon.

Ted Dyrness: Was that offered up the valley?

Jean Rothacher: No.

Ted Dyrness: You had to go to Eugene?

Jean Rothacher: Yes, you had to go to the university [University of Oregon] for that.

Ted Dyrness: Wow. Good.

Jean Rothacher: Public speaking. This has nothing to do with Jack, but I used to teach swimming classes in Blue River itself for three years. So, I got the PTA put it on [their curriculum] and they were afraid they were going to get sued, because something would happen. So, it died, which was a shame, for it was a good program.

Max Geier: Did you have kids at this time?

Jean Rothacher: No. we didn't have any children. [Possibly they had left home]

Ted Dyrness: Dick Fredriksen was there after Jack.

Max Geier: Oh, okay.

Jean Rothacher: Fredriksen, and then, they [he and his family] moved to Corvallis. I don't know who came after that.

Ted Dyrness: Ross Mersereau. Jack and Jean occupied the residence first, then it was Dick Fredriksen and his family. Then, it was Ross or maybe Al Levno was in there, too. Yeah, Al may have lived there too.

Max Geier: Do you recall any interaction with the district ranger?

Jean Rothacher: Ed Anderson.

Max Geier: Ed Anderson, okay. Yeah, I talked to him last year.

Jean Rothacher: Oh, really?

Max Geier: Up there with Mike Kerrick.

Jean Rothacher: Oh, Mike.

Max Geier: They live about two houses apart from each other, in, what's the name of that town? It's up the McKenzie valley, not that far up [Deerhorn, east of Springfield].

Jean Rothacher: Yeah, I guess I've heard.

Max Geier: Well, what do you remember about your interactions with other members of the Andrews staff? Was that something that would it happen regularly?

Jean Rothacher: I didn't have much to do with the Andrews, really. I know I used to go out, especially after rain and check each watershed and measure. I had nothing to do with the forest, but I did have a chance once. When Jack and a group of boys went on a trip down to Arizona and had a week or so there, I was asked if I would like to man the tower lookout. I was there about a week.

Ted Dyrness: That was Carpenter Lookout.

Jean Rothacher: Carpenter Lookout, the most beautiful job in the world. I'd look out see just forest below, and it was beautiful.

Ted Dyrness: Good view of the Three Sisters.

Jean Rothacher: No, I don't think you could see the Three Sisters from there.

Ted Dyrness: Is that right?

Jean Rothacher: I don't think so.

Ted Dyrness: You could see the Three Sisters. It's a nice view.

Jean Rothacher: Oh, yeah.

Max Geier: So, you spent a week up there?

Jean Rothacher: I spent a week there, and that was a high point for me.

Ted Dyrness: Who asked you to do that?

Jean Rothacher: Ed [Anderson].

Ted Dyrness: Ed, the district ranger.

Jean Rothacher: Yeah, because it was just in the fall, when the college students, who had been there all summer, were going home and back to school. The weather looked sort of bad and they felt they should have someone up there. Toward the end of the week, you could see clouds to the west, and it got higher and higher, and then it rained.

Ted Dyrness: So, then you could go. You could leave?

Jean Rothacher: Yes, I could go. I didn't want to leave. That's interesting.

Max Geier: I guess there wouldn't be very many people coming out to see you at the lookout. Did you have any visitors while you were at the lookout?

Jean Rothacher: I didn't know anyone who would be likely to come and see me. I didn't see anybody the whole week. But I communicated, of course. I just left when they came for me, when they decided it was time to go.

Max Geier: So, the roads only went partway up, and you rode horses the rest of the way?

Jean Rothacher: That's right.

Max Geier: Do you recall the conditions of the roads at that time? How long did it take you to get in there from the access roads?

Jean Rothacher: Couldn't have been very long, as I wasn't used to riding horses. It couldn't have been very long.

Max Geier: Do you remember some of the things that kept Jack busy? Or things he was concerned about at this time? What kinds of things on a daily basis seemed to be time consuming?

Jean Rothacher: For him on the Andrews?

Max Geier: Yeah.

Jean Rothacher: I don't know, I don't know.

Max Geier: Would he spend a lot of time actually on the Andrews, or did he tend to spend time in Corvallis?

Jean Rothacher: He spent most of it on the Andrews.

Ted Dyrness: Not only did he work with the experimental watersheds, as I recall, he had a study on rainfall interception by the tree canopies.

Jean Rothacher: I didn't even know about that.

Ted Dyrness: Didn't you know about that?

Jean Rothacher: I'm afraid that I didn't worry too much about what he was doing.

Ted Dyrness: He measured such things as stem flow and.....

Jean Rothacher: He also studied roads and the effect of logging and making roads, and the effects it had on trees. He got his masters degree in watershed management. He was interested in seeing what happens when it rains.

Max Geier: Initially, he was actually in charge of the Andrews in his role as project leader for the watershed project. Is that right?

Jean Rothacher: Yeah.

Max Geier: What was the reason for the move back to Corvallis in 1961? Was that because of the Forest Service?

Jean Rothacher: No, I just figured it was because it was easier to go back instead of the other direction. Easier for him to do that.

End of recording due to Jean's fatigue.