

1 **Telling Our Story: Honoring the Past**
2 **The History of the Forest Grove City Library**

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4 *Volume 5: 1980's Continued.* Interview with Colleen Winters, Director of Forest Grove Library,
5 continued.

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7 Interviewer: Linda Stiles-Taylor (LT)

8 Interviewee: Colleen Winters (CW)

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10 LT: I was a staff member ... and you see interviews with various people that have left the library
11 and have come back and their volunteers. And so, uh, you've drawn people back into all these
12 advances volunteers who used to be the staff. That aren't no more

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14 CW: Yes we have. We've been very fortunate that way.

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16 LT: Now, all the hat events are certainly another aspect of...

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18 CW: Right. We're sort of known for our hats. And I've just brought a few of mine, just to kind
19 of talk about that for a minute, I guess. (Pulls out hat) Uh. This one actually was from celebration
20 of banned book week. At Forest Grove we decided a long time ago that unlike most libraries who
21 celebrate banned book week in September with a display of banned books, we did that for a
22 couple of years and we didn't feel very comfortable with it. So we changed the celebration early
23 on to be a celebration of the freedom to read. And instead of having books draped in black and
24 those sorts of things that libraries do around that, we decided to change it to a theme that was
25 around celebrating the freedom to read. And to that end we wore boaters one years and bright
26 buttons that said "Celebrate the Freedom to Read". Now, the American Library Association has
27 changed their banned book theme to indeed celebrate the freedom to read. So, um (pulls out
28 another hat with colorful stripes and spots). We have always had, for a long time we used to wear
29 hats for summer reading. We, each staff member, would create a hat related to the theme.
30 Unfortunately, I've forgotten which this was about.

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32 LT: We've had some of those...

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34 CW: We've had some of those. Do you remember the theme?

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36 LT: I can't... It was... Everybody was wearing aprons. It was about cooking or something. (CW:
37 Yeah, and they just told me...yeah) Cook up a good book or something (laughing)?

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39 CW: And they just told me before I came in and I've already forgot. (pulls out safari hat with
40 photos hanging off brim, puts on hat) This, this theme was Wild About Books. Wild About
41 Books. And I chose a Maurice Sendak theme, and uh, with a safari hat, and this was one of my
42 favorites. (LT laughs) We used to have the children who came to summer reading vote on their
43 favorite hat and that always was very fun. We had (pulls out sailor hat) Catch a Wave Read, that
44 was a summer reading theme one year. (pulls out construction hat) (whispers: I don't have all of
45 them, I see) This hat is a different story that I think we should save for the '90's. It's was once
46 we decided that WILI was indeed under construction. (puts hat away)

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LT: And then there's often the hats that are given as presents or for special events.

CW: Yes, our going away parties are quite an interesting festivity as well because we like to give scrapbooks that have the history of the employee's time here, and the various, the photos of various celebrations. And yes there's very often a hat, and a traveling trophy that comes with that as well.

LT: And you have a hat there that's also for Boss's Appreciation Day

CW: Yes this is Boss's day (pulls out hat)

LT: You need a close up of that little tag in the front. (CW holds up front of hat to camera to show tag) Lets see, (reads tag) "thank you Colleen Winters for leading our flock".

CW: I believe it's kind of a revamped Burger King crown (LT laughs), but it's nicely done, I think. And it had an accompanying ad in the newspaper under the Boss's Day and I don't think they do that anymore. But this staff was nice enough to buy an advertisement that said (points at tag) this on it. So those are some of my hats. I might have one or two left for next decade. (sets hat down)

LT: Your office has always been known as a wonderful kind of a museum of some of the wonderful events (CW: stuff, yes) Good library stuff, the hats can be found among the memorabilia.

CW: Yes, yes. There's plenty of stuff.

LT: And then other things that happened in the Eighties. There was a lot of political activity in the community. The library was a place where all ideas could be expressed and all opinions heard, and facilities used for public meetings, and so forth. (CW nods head) At times that became controversial. And you became active in intellectual freedom circles and you were a strong proponent of that. And well talk about more of that in the Nineties also. But it was certainly one of the things that had been an interest of yours from the get go. (CW: Yeah) Now, lets see, Mt St. Helens blew before your time, (CW laughs) But there was some other things happening in the community that in the Eighties that impacted library service. Can you think of anything in particular that stands out in your mind? Of things that were going on in the community. I know there was an extreme recession. A lot of people leaving town because of the economy going sour in the whole state of Oregon, and that certainly had impact on the struggles for funding.

CW: Right. The struggles for funding are not specific for any decade, but I think that for my tenure anyway they were certainly noticeable. However, I believe it was in the eighties, if not it was the early nineties, when the city decided to go out for an operating levy. They did that a number of times so I'm not sure which time this was. But, there was one time when they were going out for an operating levy and they had to make a list of the things that would be cut if it failed. And so each department had to generate a list of what they would cut. And of course ours,

93 when we had to generate those lists, which Mike always had to do and I still have to do. You
94 always have to create a list of things that would be eliminated if something doesn't pass or if
95 there's not enough money. We do that almost every year. We always would talk about hours,
96 that we would cut back on the number of hours. We would have fewer books to circulate, and
97 maybe, well almost always, there was a proposal to eliminate story time, the children's program
98 of some sort.

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100 LT: Which you were always a tremendous supporter of.

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102 CW: That was painful

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104 LT: And under your leadership the story time just grew and grew and grew

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106 CW: Well that particular year. I mean it was always offered up just because it was something
107 where you could say we still have the core services, the basic services, and you know in library
108 land that we spend a lot trying to define what are core services or basic services and each library
109 kind of thinks about it differently, but we've done a lot of work here on that over the years and in
110 fact have had to do that sort of work. Where you say we have to provide these things, we have to
111 be open, we have to have books on our shelves, we have to have people to greet people, and
112 there are some things that have to happen. And then you try to define, as we have, what other
113 things, even though they might seem like their niceties if you can afford them, but are essential
114 to this being this library. What makes this library this library, not just a library. And certainly our
115 children's program and our story time is one of those things where we could be a library without
116 story..... < cuts off mid-sentence >

117
118 < picks up again later >

119 CW: ...generate a list of potential reductions if the levy was not passed. And every year that was
120 part of preparing the budget was to prepare a list. And, for the most part it still is in some way or
121 another, where you have to think about what would happen if there's not as much WCCLS
122 money, or city money, or something, but we always had to do it in those days. Just had to
123 prepare a list of reductions, and this particular levy we offered up the usual: reduction in hours,
124 reduction of materials budget, and of course the children's program was always one that we put
125 forth. And the children's program was particularly painful because we have such an excellent
126 program here. It has quite the reputation, particularly the story time, the component of the
127 children's program. It has a great tradition and a proud history and to have to offer that up each
128 year was painful. But it was part of what we did. I want to just mention about story time, that it's
129 part of what we think makes Forest Grove Library different. And, I may be repeating myself, but
130 the story time... We have had to over the years, have had to and wanted to, define what make
131 FGL what is and why it's not just a library and what are the core services. What are core services
132 to just being any public library and what are the things that we think are essential to the FGL.
133 And story time was one of those things. It is considered in many libraries something nice if you
134 can afford it; here it is pretty much essential to what we do. And again it is because of the
135 tradition and the manner in which it is done. It's unique, it's special, it's different, and we are
136 very, very proud of our story time program. But that didn't keep it from being offer up each year
137 as something, if we were going to have dramatic reductions in dollars that that was going to be,

138 in order to keep the doors open and books on the shelf, that was offered up very often along with
139 the summer reading program, which is, it just seems like heresy, but it was.

140 Well the levy that I was going to talk about, which I believe happened in the late 1980's. Every
141 department did that, it was part of the deal you had to say what you would cut, and the city
142 decided that if it was defeated that the library would be the only department that would not have
143 any cuts. And I will never forget hearing that and telling people that. And throughout the state,
144 people said that can't be true, that doesn't happen to public libraries, it doesn't happen, that's not
145 how that works, libraries are the first thing to get cut. But in fact, and I believe the levy passed
146 and so there weren't cuts made, but our hit list was not incorporated into the decision making,
147 and that was nothing short of a miracle. So that was one of the highlights of the 80's (CW
148 laughs) and I think from my perspective.

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150 LT: And now, I think we can go to some of the wonderful pictures we have of that era.

151

152 CW: Alright

153

154 [B/W photos are shown on screen]

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156 LT: This is a (word?), a collection of (word?) photos from 1951 that pre-date the library's
157 participation and it was more the business community that got involved, but that changed as time
158 went on.

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160 [photo of parade]

161 CW: This, I believe, was actually our first entry into the (word?) days parade. The state library,
162 or the Oregon Library Association, one of the two, used to own that six or ten foot tall puppet or
163 12 ft tall puppet called Rita Book. And there was another costume, I don't think you can see in
164 this photo, of book worm. And so that's the staff dressed in Jubilate t-shirts because it was just
165 after our 75th anniversary celebration. And that puppet is Rita Book, and it was so hot that day,
166 and poor Miguel inside Rita Book (CW laughs) was suffering greatly.

167

168 [photo of Rita Book]

169 CW: Yes, this is a close up of Rita, Rita Book. And we were fortunate that one our employees,
170 Miguel L.(?), was amenable to wearing that thing because the kids absolutely loved her, or him I
171 guess actually. They were around for summer reading and promoting summer reading and it was
172 very much fun.

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174 [photo of parade – marching band]

175 CW: This is another year of (word?)town days. And of course they were always held in March or
176 February (CW and LT laugh) which to this day people think is odd, that there is a community in
177 the winter in Oregon. You can see that is was a grey day and you can see the library in the
178 background. This is the Forest Grove High School band and I think we were not far behind them.

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180 [photo of parade – library people]

181 CW: And this would be the staff dressed up as various storybook characters. I would be
182 Goldilocks there (laughs).

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184 LT: (laughs) With your bear. Cara's Mary Poppins I presume.

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186 CW: Right.

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188 LT: She happened to incorporate an umbrella, which was a smart move, into her costume.

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190 CW: That's right. Um, I don't remember many of the other characters. Ann probably could tell
191 you better about it. She had (video cuts off mid-sentence)

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193 [photo of parade – people with signs with book titles]

194 CW: This is another year, our contribution to the parade. And we wore banned books, and we
195 were the Banned Book Band. And this one, I think we got some sort of prize for it, but the
196 community didn't respond as well. They didn't exactly get it. It was a little less obvious what we
197 were doing and not quite so clear what the, what it all meant. So some people got it and loved it
198 and some people didn't, but we had a great time.

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200 LT: That one I got sucked into as a volunteer

201

202 CW: Oh is that right?

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204 LT: I'm on the end there, Deenie, and I thought it was a blast. Participating and celebrating the
205 freedom to read.

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207 [photo of newspaper clipping]

208 CW: Another newsworthy event from the 80's, when the city decided to sell, sell the building
209 that formally housed the library and Pacific University purchased it. And the sum was something
210 like 40, 40,000 or 41,000 dollars. That money was put then in a special fund, which remains
211 today, that is consistent with Mrs. Rogers wishes. It is kind of seed money what is now called the
212 Library Endowment Fund, which is actually not a true endowment fund, but it holds the various
213 gifts and bequests we receive over the year and the definition of the fund that the city has made
214 is that it will only, the money in that fund, will only be used for capital construction.

215 (photos put away)

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217 LT: Ok. And to close out the 80's you wanted to talk about the library commission?

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219 CW: Well yes. I think it's really important to, as were talking about the library, about the
220 tremendous volunteers. And some of them that I first knew were involved with the library
221 commission. And seeing Peg Gilbert's picture reminded me of the library commission and all of
222 the incredible volunteers we've had over the years. So, we've talked a lot about the wonderful
223 staff that we have, but I want to talk about the Library..., uh Friends, uh..., the volunteers as
224 well. We can talk about the Friends at another time because they have, they are a completely
225 different group of people. They come to the library in a different way, they come to do their
226 service in a different way. But the Library Commission, over the years, has been the most
227 amazingly supportive group of people. And one of the first things that Mike Smith told me about
228 having this job was that no matter what kind of a day he had, or what kind of a week he was
229 having, or how he feeling about library land at that particular time, when he went to a Library

230 Commission it always made him feel better. And I didn't understand that. I didn't, the whole
231 idea of a meeting (CW and LT laugh) and a, and a meeting with an agenda. It wasn't, I didn't
232 quite get that, grasp that until I had experienced a few Library Commission meetings. And
233 indeed we have been blessed, this library has been blessed, over the years with the most
234 committed group of library commissioners. Um, lots of people give their time to libraries,
235 they're happy to do it, but these people actual have some authority and the ability to make some
236 decisions and so not everybody jumps at the chance to do that. And these people have, and many
237 of them have been on the commission for years. Peg was on when I first came on...
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239 LT: Otherwise known a Dr. Margaret Gilbert

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241 CW: Yes. Dr. Margaret Gilbert

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243 LT: Formerly of Pacific University

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245 CW: Belovedly known as Peg. And so...um, But there have been many like her who have said
246 "this was important, and I'm willing to give up my time" and I've had the best experience with
247 our Library Commission over the years and just think it's important to have that as part of this
248 history.

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250 <Video Ends>

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