

**Oral History Number: 398-001**

**Interviewees: Marion Rasmussen and Linda LaTores**

**Interviewer: Teresa Hamann**

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**Project: Rasmussen Family Oral History Project**

Teresa Hamann: This is Teresa Hamann conducting an interview with Marion Rasmussen and Linda LaTores in the University of Montana Mansfield Library on August 11, 2005.

Mrs. Rasmussen, tell me where you were born and raised and something about your early years.

Marion Rasmussen: I was born in Washington D.C. I'm sort of what they might call a "freak" in that the town is very cosmopolitan. A lot of big dramatic and a bunch of military moving in and out. But I was there and I stayed there. I went all through school there and graduated from George Washington University and graduated with my A.B. degree. As a matter of fact I met Wayne my senior year, actually my last half of a senior year. It went on from there (laughter). We had two dates and we became engaged. I remember one of my granddaughters, when she heard about this at our fiftieth anniversary, she turned to her mother, whose Lily's older sister, this is our video tape that they took, is that right?! She became just quite astounded. Anyway, it was a wonderful marriage. That actually, my life from then on dealt with Wayne. So I don't know if you want to go into that or not at this point.

We bought a house first. We were fortunate to be able to do this, get a house right away. In those days we bought a two bedroom, all brick house for \$6,500 (laughs). And I sold it, not too many years later for about \$14,000. Then we moved to Riverdale, Virginia and bought a house there for about the same amount and were there for forty-seven years and ended up selling that, oh goodness do you remember, over \$100,00, well over that. We were able to buy a condominium up here in Concord, Massachusetts where I now live, where Wayne and I lived up until he died. We moved up in 1995 in November, near the end of it. As I kind of recall, the meteorologist of '95, '96, it was a horrible winter. I remember saying to Wayne, "We should've stayed in Virginia" (laughter). But anyway, we survived. My life from then on was dealing with living here and enjoying the family nearby. We decided to come up simply because our two daughters were here. Our son, who was back and forth from Arizona, and he was in Virginia at the time we moved and when he got back again, he very accusingly said, "You left!" I said, "Well you went first!" So anyway, it turned out they moved out to Phoenix, Arizona. At that time, Sedona. Wayne and I both (unintelligible) then he went back to Washington for a while. Wayne and I of course stayed in Massachusetts. We lived there---well Wayne died April 30<sup>th</sup> of 2004, just last year. I missed him dreadfully of course. But I've been fortunate in having wonderful helpers around and that's my life in hard times so far. Any other questions?

TH: I do have a few more questions. With you being born and raised in Washington D.C. and Dr. Rasmussen being born and raised in Montana, you came from very different backgrounds totally, and it sounds like that wasn't an obstacle.

MR: Not at all. It's really funny in a way. I had always in my deepest dreams thought I would love to marry a cowboy who was very wealthy and educated (laughter). And lo and behold I hit the jackpot, right off the bat. No, he was a love, and I knew it from day one. We just we had sixty-four wonderful years together. So I've always loved that part of it and loved him up to the end, still do, but I'm doing pretty well right now because I have, fortunate enough, Wayne made enough good investments from when we lived together. He made good money so that when he died I was still well enough off to maintain the girls, the health ladies that came in and take care of him, who now take care of me. There are definitely times when I need taken care of. I have a lot of medication, I don't walk well by myself by any means, I do have a walker which is a godsend and a wonderful daughter. My older daughter is in Marshfield. She also has a full time job as a psychologist and is so far away that she's really not much help except, well barely. Cause she's busy you know. But her oldest daughter now is going to be married September, 10<sup>th</sup>. I can hardly wait to go; sorry Wayne won't be in on it but he'll be there in spirit. So I am fortunately still enjoying life.

TH: Let's move back into history again just a little bit. Tell me about the first time that you visited the west with Dr. Rasmussen.

MR: Well, we were poor enough, believe it or not, we married a total of income 3,500 bucks a year between us. Wayne got \$2,400 and I earned all of \$1,200. So at the time we thought, "Oh we can swing this." We did fortunately. But not enough to be able to afford a car. We used public transportation to and from work. I worked on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, straight down, and he was straight down the hill from the apartment in the Department of Agriculture, so it was very good. I must go back to that in a way because Wayne was very involved. One very snowy day when we were living in the Bethesda hill, we were heading downhill to get to the bus. One of our neighbors down the hill was stuck in the snow. So Wayne and I stopped to push him out. He was wondering where we were going and he was down at (unintelligible). I remember that very well. And so we told him into town, and he said, "Good hop in."

So of course on the way he found out what Wayne was doing. Which at that point in time was only clerking, clerk typing in the department; he was trying to get into history and hadn't quite made it yet. He had applied to personnel, of course and (unintelligible), and I don't know if he was a doctor or what but he said "Personnel?! For heaven's sake let me take care of this". So he got on the horn and got through to the history section and got Wade into it. That was marvelous, talk about serendipity that was above and beyond. But anyway, so that went wonderful. And Wayne got into the history section and the head of it was a man called Ostiff Bine. And he was quite an interesting individual. He owned a farm out in West Virginia and later on he was, but the head of the history section at that point in time was a man named Everett

Everetts. And Wade worked under him. Wayne was still living in Bethesda hill I believe, at the time. Gee, never got back to where we went to Montana.

TH: You will. (laughs)

MR: Well anyways, we got word late that night that Everett had died. So Wayne was sort of heir, apparently; so Wade laid there all night biting his knuckles, wondering what was going to happen. But he did get the job, he took the ball and went running. That history section just blossomed under him. It grew up to at least fifteen people and they were extremely active. He was the first person there to hire blacks and eventually he moved her up gradually, and eventually she became his (unintelligible) and she was just devoted to Wayne as were all the people there. We moved to a bigger house in Virginia and then my parents came to live with us. Because my dad had two heart attacks which led to three, and of course I was the only child so when he went, Mom moved back. Anyway, back to the history section again.

Linda LaTores: I think Dad... excuse me this is Linda LaTores, I think he was the first, this is what I've heard anyway, to hire a black personnel secretary. There were lots of blacks in the department and so on but none were as...

MR: I thought Vivian was his first black secretary.

LL: Yes, yes he moved her up the ranks.

MR: Yes he did because she was kind of low down on the totem pole for a long time. He eventually put her as his secretary. Am I right?

LL: Yes, but Washington at that time was so segregated that the blacks were not in positions; they could be in secretarial positions, but not personal secretaries to people. And so Dad, I believe, was one of the first to have black personal secretary which was of higher stature than just being a clerk typist.

MR: Well I know Vivian just worshipped the ground he walked on. But like I say, all the people there did. As a result, he made the whole place very cohesive, and no question was too big for him to answer. He said that he would try. I have one very funny incident and that's one of his colleagues by the name of Jane Porter. He was gone one day so Jane got this man who had a question and she went through all the files and found out all the information the man wanted. Gave it to him, and long behold he called back and asked for Wayne. Jane's remark was, "Well he had to speak to god." But anyway, to get back to Montana for crying out loud. The only time, or the first time I was out there, we finally bought a car in 1941, I think it was. We were married '39, we didn't get a car till '41. I had to learn to drive, but anyway. When we got married, none of us were rich enough to bring his mother to the wedding. She lived in Montana, and so the result was she never got the wedding and I never got to meet her until 1941 when we drove out in our car. I remember his brother Otto, was a nice boy, went with us. Wayne let me drive.

I had my license; he let me drive part of the way and poor Otto was in the back seat chewing his knuckles. We made it safe and sound. That was my first trip back to Montana, first trip ever I should say. Come to find out, Wayne had lived there, born and raised, until he came to Washington of course, and he had never gotten to Yellowstone Park. I said, "Will boy, we're taking care of that." So we all went to Yellowstone Park and it was wonderful. As a matter of fact we got out to Glacier too. So that was great. It was nice to meet his mother; she was a really dear, sweet, great person.

TH: Was she living in town then?

MR: Yes she was living the huge town of Lamina (?), 150 souls with a hotel that was under a distinct kilt that nobody wanted to stay there. Of course we stayed with Mom when we first got out there. It was my first experience being a real city girl, my first experience with an outdoor latrine and taking a bath in the big metal tub Saturday night down in the basement. That was quite an experience. It was. It was interesting but one other funny thing in connection with that trip. Wayne warned me it never rains in Montana, never. Lord, it misted the whole time practically that we were there." Well this never happens," said he. But I reminded him of his remark. So that was up till then. What next?

LL: Wasn't there something about Dad and you and a bear in Yellowstone?

MR: Oh golly, yes, I forgot about that and Otto was with us. The bears were warm with us on the roads in that point in time. They've since changed a lot. But you know people were out feeding them like everything. All I wanted to do was take a picture so I got out of the car, started to take a picture. The guy had been feeding him finished and went back into his car. So I was the next in line, but I had a camera not food so the bear starts coming towards me and Otto in the back, big help, "Look out Marion!" So I fall for the car, and poor Wayne starts for the bear, who then does turn away, fortunately. When we got back to Lamina, we were telling Ma and brother Paul about this, Paul, "What were you gonna do Wayne, if the bear had come for you?" Wayne said, "I would've used my good sized foot." Paul (unintelligible) that wouldn't last long. Anyway, that was our first experience in Yellowstone. It was fun. Then when we went back years later with our kids, Linda was (unintelligible). I think you went along. Karen was older. I think we drove to Yellowstone Lake this May. Now the bear we'd seen on the way, well Karen was heartbroken, she was crying in the hotel because she had to see the bear. So my lord, we had to check in the room and go back out so Karen could see the bear. Sure enough, the second trip she saw a bear. But believe me they aren't that frequent anymore; people have tried to stop that, the rangers or whatever, people in charge.

LL: I think anymore we call people who step out of their car "bear bait"

MR: Well, very good.

LL: That is unnerving.

TH: What if you're...I'm sorry here. So Dr. Rasmussen served in the army during World War Two, so tell me about that and then the transition back into the Department of Agriculture.

MR: Well, I was trying to recall the dates on all of that. I know he was called up when I was pregnant with Paul. They let him be deferred until Paul was born. December 25, 1942, I believe that's right. I think that's right, I'm sure that's right. And with that Wayne was gone. So he missed the first five years of his son's life. My dear parents, bless their hearts, we were in a house with a fence at that time, two bedroom, but it was hard for me to keep it up with the baby. So Mom and Dad said, "Well come back and stay with us." We rented the house and I moved back with my parents. I was trying to recall the exact date but I think, it was '47 before Wayne got back. One interesting thing about was that is while I was in a room with Mom and Dad. Paul was little but I was with loose ends with him. So I asked Mama, "Would it be all right if I tried to get a part-time job." She said, "Sure, I'll take care of him." So that was very sweet, so I went in half a day, not necessarily every day, but anyway I did work for the last paper which was still there, I never will forget the thing that really ticked me off was there was another women in the office who worked. Her husband never left the country, he was in the army, but I think he was stationed in of all places, Florida, for god's sake, pardon the expression. He got out early on, and I was fussing and fuming because Wayne had ended up being in the shakes which was supreme headquarters for Eisenhower and they kept him because he could translate German newspapers. So he was stuck over in Frankfurt for another year. And when I talked to this women, whose name I cannot remember, fortunately, she was in a sorority but not mine, but anyway I was so upset, the remark I made, I was complaining, "Oh, Wayne hasn't come home." She said, "Well, they can't all come home, Marion, at the same time." "Well," I said. I could've slapped that women then and there. I didn't, but I never liked her from that day on. Anyway, he finally did make it home but a year later. Boy, I remember vividly the night. I went with my parents and Paul. I think it was Fort McNair. Anyway it was one of the forts that was still around Washington and we parked and I saw Wayne standing under a light, and I was gone. Paul and my parents caught up eventually, but anyway then Wayne transitioned back into Park on 39th Street. No, he hadn't gotten into the history department yet because we were still in Bethesda , and he hadn't...I'm getting terribly fuzzy on my dates I'm terribly sorry, Teresa.

TH: Do you want to pause for a minute?

MR: Yes.

TH: A brief break and we are returning to Dr. Rasmussen's army service in World War Two.

MR: He was gone, as I said, '42 when he left, it must've been around '47 before he returned because he was gone the first five years of Paul's life. Paul's the older child and he's my son.

LL: Dad could've been out of the army—

MR: Oh that was it. There was a women working, did I mention this before? Anyway, he had to spend another time working over in Frankfurt Germany because at that point in time he'd been transferred to the Supreme Headquarters under Eisenhower because he knew how to translate German newspapers. So he was stuck there for another year.

LL or TH: But he should've had a deferment right.

MR: He could've had a deferment totally because he couldn't see worth a darn. He had memorized the eye chart so he could get in, for crying out loud. Then the doctor told me later, he said, "Marion I could've had him deferred totally due to asthma." Because Wayne had allergies to something awful. Anyway, he went. Fortunately, he started and went to the Medical Corps and he was sent down to Lubbock, Texas. I'll never forget, almost did there, but anyway he hated it with a purple passion. It was hot, dry, dusty and that's where he took his basic training. Then he came up to Greenville. He had one break in between because, I remember, he got home in his uniform, I had a beautiful studio picture taken of me and Paul. Paul must be about two and a half in the picture. It's adorable. Everlynn got it I think, my son's wife, grabbed it and put it in a beautiful book that she displayed at Wayne's wake for the funeral, but then took it with her. I hadn't seen it since, so I told Paul I want a copy of that picture, it's dear to my heart. So we did see him then and then we saw him briefly in Greenville, Pennsylvania where that was his last departure place. That was tough. It was great to see him but we had to be billeted, whatever, at a person's house. I always remember when I and the baby stayed there because Wayne still had to be in barracks. Her name was Mrs. Growl. I often think back that I didn't really appreciate what that women went through but anyway, when they assigned me to her the women said, "Her name is 'growl' but she really doesn't". She was really sweet and very nice and Wayne would be able to get off nights and spend the nights with us and then have to get back to the barracks by six or some such thing. But it was a little tough in that Paul was at that age, Mommy totally, and poor Wayne would try to carry him or something. He carried him down the stairs screaming at blue murder, Paul. Poor Wayne was so embarrassed he totally died for that matter. But got him out of the house. But it was interesting because how I met up with him there, I knew he was there, but I didn't know where he was going to be. Paul and I were in a restaurant having breakfast, and Paul was sitting in a high chair and I saw Wayne go by the window, very slowly, I think he'd been on a march or something. And I jumped up, and I said to the waiters, "Watch him!" I flew out the door and grabbed Wayne and it was so nice to see him and so that was when I met him up there. So he stayed with Paul and me until he had to leave on orders.

That was tough, but the thing was Paul and I left a day earlier than they all reported because Paul had asthma so horrible and Greenville, Pennsylvania was not a very good place for him. It was just so hard for me to cope with it. He didn't want to eat. I finally found a nursery where mothers could go and stay for the day and that's where I used to take him. I always had the feeling, poor Paul, if he didn't get three squares a day he was going to pass out or die. You should see him now (laughter). Six feet four and then some. But that was a tough time, but anyway he suffered from the asthma so badly, I said to Wayne, "I hate to say this, honey, but I

have got to go back home with him.” So I left a day early, and that was hard because I knew that was going to be the last time. It was so tough that I ended up in the train, I got terrible sick that night, and I had to get up and go to the bathroom and throw up. I said the first time, back to the porter, “Keep an eye on the baby will you?” So I, after the second time, I didn’t say anything to him I just went. Paul slept through the whole thing fortunately. But that was really rough, that’s when I did say (inaudible, get emotional).

TH: Coming after the break.

MR: Wayne was stationed as I said, Lubbock Texas. Where he was in the medical corps and he met up with a man named Jon Temple, and as Jon said later, “Wayne you are so damn smart.” Jon was no slouch himself so Wayne just became best buddies, as long as they were together. I don’t think they were together all the time.

LL: I think I recall, this is Linda, Johnny saying that when tests would be done and he expected he would get the highest score, and there was always some guy who was beating him out and he had to find out who it was, and then found out it was Wayne, and that’s how they became friends. Who could be beating me on these tests, you know?

MR: Now the first place he went to, as far as I know, was London. That was the place he went to from Pennsylvania where they shipped out. I’m pretty sure it was London because he didn’t end up in Frankfurt, Germany till the darn thing was over. But he remembers the bombings in London and he had to get down a few times. In fact there was a guy walking with him and he said, “Get on the floor, you son of a bitch,” as they do in the army. So Wayne learned to drop, but he survived those. As I say, that was basically where he stayed the whole time. I guess that’s where he ended up being in the Eisenhower group. That’s all I can remember on that score. Because, thank god, he actually never did any fighting.

LL: Although when the guy told him to get down, I think that was in Germany, and a guy was trying to shoot Dad. (Chatter) I remember Dad talking about being in London and the bombs would come and they would be whistle bombs. You would just hear the whistle and then it would be quiet and you wouldn’t know where it fell. He’d be looking around nervously, like should we be going somewhere. Everybody talking nervously, so he finally said he just had to (unintelligible).

MR: I forgot that, a fellow agricultural historian in England. There’s quite a detail behind that one. By the name of Teddy—

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

TH: The interview with Marian Rasmussen and Linda LaTorres and we're starting with a story about Teddy Russell.

MR: Wayne managed to stay with someone. A fellow agricultural historian in England, of all things. He wasn't actually stationed in London. Wayne was stationed in London, Teddy lived in Surbery, Suppet County, Surrey. Anyway, he visited with them a lot. They had a younger daughter by the name of Helen, and it ended up that our son Paul, let me put it this way. Helen eventually came over well after the war was over for a vacation in America to stay with us. She met up with our motley crew, as I like to say, Karen and Paul of course. Although Paul at that point in time was down in William and Mary, College of William and Mary. Well, they met, Paul and Helen, and they got married eventually, after Paul graduated. Anyway, Wayne did visit a lot with Teddy. They thought they were giving him such a treat by feeding him Brussels sprouts. And Wayne hates Brussels sprouts, but he ate them like the good soldier that he was. Let me go back there to London; that was where he was stationed. He'd visit there but he couldn't stay, I don't believe. Anyway, quite a friendship developed there. So it turned out after Wayne got out of the army and Paul went through college a little bit more. I think he was in his senior year when Helen came over for a visit. She was (unintelligible), she's now the ex daughter-in-law. Anyway that's another story.

Wayne got back. He spent the last years as I said in Frankfurt, Germany, that was really the end of his tour of duty over there I guess you could say. Came back to Washington and went on into the agriculture history, brought him up by his bootstraps (unintelligible).

TH: Now, did he start his Ph.D. before he went to the army, or did he start after?

MR: No, he had started it before and had done everything but the dissertation and the orals of the dissertation. When he got brought back, he wasn't that keen on doing anything more about it. And I said, "Honey, we are going to finish this up if it's the last thing we do." I typed up his dissertation which he had written out in long hand on a card table. A girl, a women, a girl who Wayne did help get her degree through American University, when she saw him doing this she said Dr. Rasmussen, well I get it was after he got his Ph.D., "You have got to get a word processor." So we bought the thing. Now how did that happen, I know I typed the thing—

LL: That was a number of years later. It was after he had got his doctorate. Computers weren't individually sold at that point in time.

MR: Well, what was I typing up?

LL: You were typing his dissertation in triplicate.

MR: Well how come he took orals from it, didn't he?

LL: Yes and he got his doctorate and years later he was still writing by hand on the card table.

MR: Well how can he have taken his orals if he hadn't written it out, his dissertation?

LL: He was writing something else that was after he retired when he had the contract for two books, wasn't it? Wasn't that when he got the computer?

MR: Yes, yes, yes you're right, I'm losing it.

LL: I'm just so enjoying the stories I remember that one.

MR: It was comical because we bought the thing in December, set it up in January, it was a living room getup. There it sat in all its glory, Wayne and I looking at it. Brother Paul came in February to visit, plugged it in, and it still sat there, neither one of us knowing what to do with it. We finally saw in the local newspaper, a hands-on course of computer learning at the local Fairbanks High School. So we both went and learned how to use this computer. But it really, we never got online or anything like that. Eventually it got to be quite a thing. When we bought it was strictly a word processor. But yeah, I did type out, I don't know what.

LL: Dissertation.

MR: What did he take his orals on? How could he do it without having submitted it? I'm stuck here.

TH: We'll begin with talking about the orals for Wayne Rasmussen's masters.

MR: I am slightly confused, I am sorry to admit, it was his master's degree that he had to take orals for. This was before he went into the army, of course. I remember at the time I was secretary for the dean of the School of Government. I got to know all the professors which was wonderful. It helped pay for my tuition as well as meeting all the big wigs. They were wonderful. They'd come in and chat with me, and as a matter of fact, we got engaged in April, and we both kind of didn't do too well, until we graduated in June because Dr. Marilyn, I remember his name Howard Marilyn, came around to the office and said, "Marion, what has happened? Wayne almost didn't make his orals."

I said, "Well, we just engaged. Oh boy, that's it."

Later on, my tax teacher, deadliest course I've ever taken, said, "Marion you didn't do too well on that."

I said "Well, I just engaged." Oh lordy, so we almost didn't make it but we did. Yes, that was his orals before he went away.

TH: I have a question that's kind of moving to a new area maybe. The topic of his dissertation was as I recall, about a country outside of the United States, obviously he spoke fluent German. As a historian in the USDA did he pursue any of those interests in different countries or languages later?

MR: No he really didn't. He was first thinking about agriculture in one of the South American countries and we were going to go to Quito, I remember, I forget what the state was, Columbia? Northwest actually of South America, I remember seeing it on a map. Ecuador?

LL: That might be right, that sounds right.

MR: Anyway, the town, the city of Quito we were going to go to, we never made it. So Wayne sort of turned his total thesis, I think, around to the history of agriculture more in the United States rather than South America. I think one of his professors recommended that. So that's the route that it went. So it must have been the crazy dissertation, I don't know what I was typing up there.

TH: So you talked about some of the questions I had here, I thought it was very interesting that Dr. Rasmussen served under eleven secretaries in the USDA. An article noted that each change in administration brought a need to justify the existence of an agricultural history unit. Tell me about any changes you remember, or any particular challenges, his relationships with any of those secretaries.

MR: Well, a lot of them were very interesting. Some of them sort of just slid by, as you will. For instance, the Mormon one, Dennison I think his name was, who was one of the beacons in the Mormon Church and he was not too well liked at the Department of Agriculture because when he came in, they had to eliminate coffee machines and nothing but milk. So that was a riled up balloon as far as the Department of Agriculture people were concerned. But yes, Wayne was many...well oddly enough he was called in to almost all of them, near the end of their administration. When they questioned about how do you think history will write them up with what I have done. So Wayne would, you know he'd be honest of course, what he said to some of them I have no idea. But I do know that that always came up. A lot of them called him in. The one in particular that he was very fond of was Orville Freeman, who Wayne wrote, co-wrote, a book that Freeman put out. I can't remember the name of it.

LL: *The World without Hunger*.

MR: Wayne and one other guy helped totally to write that. So Freeman was always very grateful to him. So funny story, when Wayne retired, after 50 years in the department. At his retirement party, Freeman came and he came over to me and said, "Marion, I bet you hate me."

I said, "Well I wasn't very happy with you at that time," because they were writing this book. Wayne would get a phone call Saturday morning, "Wayne are you going to be in the office today? I'd sure like to talk with you. This is Orville."

"Oh, sure," Wayne says, "I'm going to be there I'll bet." So off Wayne went, Saturday morning for crying out loud. So yes, I told Orville I wasn't very happy with him.

But I said, "You're still a good guy." He was, and Wayne very much enjoyed working with him. But, yes it was a wonderful story. I don't know if I should tell this or not.

One thing that Freeman said to me once, this was when Kennedy was president, and Orville was secretary of agriculture, and Johnson got to be the vice president, and Freeman said to Wayne, "You know, Wayne, when the going gets tough make a good decision as to who will get to be vice president."

Poor JFK had no choice when Johnson, somehow or other he had to be chosen. He really wanted Freeman, and but he said, "Total asshole, if it hadn't been for that you and I would be over the White House." But anyway, that was totally different.

As I say Wayne, he enjoyed to that. He once said to me, "You know I should write a book about secretaries of agriculture that I have known," but he didn't. That so often happens, I'm going to do this but I don't get around to it. But anyway, that was interesting, and he did enjoy (unintelligible). He usually had a good rapport and a good thing for the secretaries to say about when they left, I don't know what happened to Dennison, what he said, if indeed he was even called in.

But one problem was when the end came for Wayne to go. For a while there was this rule after the age of seventy you had to retire. Then they passed the rule which the office called "Wayne Rasmussen's Rule" they could leave later on, after 70. Wayne left at 72. I kept telling him, "Wayne, you should retire, your (unintelligible) probably dispensable." but no, no he had to hang in there.

So eventually these two men came in from the county extension services and said, "Wayne, we wish you would write a history about this. The 75th anniversary of the county extension services is coming up, and we would like you to write a history about it."

Wayne said, "Well, I'd have to retire to do that."

"Well, that's what we were hoping you would do." (laughs)

When Wayne told me that, I said, "Oh boy, here's your hat and what's your hurry."

So with that, he retired and it was a good thing because he was a workaholic and he went from one big job to another big job. I kid you not, I had to drive him back to the office almost every morning to go back and get the material he needed for this history. You know, eventually at that point in time, my mother had died, we were finally free if you will. She lived with us for thirty-two years so it was tough for a while. (Unintelligible) Anyway she was not always the easiest character, as the kids can certify. But anyway, that's beside the point. When she died, I joined Fairbanks Health Club and was doing aquatics swim lessons. Not lessons, aquatic exercises, but it was wonderful and I finally managed to talk Wayne into not going into the office quite so soon. I could take him later, do the swim first. And he got hooked, and he did it from then on even after we moved here, and it was just marvelous until he got Parkinson's and then we couldn't. But we enjoyed it for many, many years.

LL: He even wrote an article in the health club you guys joined in Concord had a little paper, and Mom and Dad were the feature article. Everyone loved them.

Can I tell a story? I remember asking Dad in terms of justifying what does a cultural historian do, resolve that with every new administration. I said to Dad once at the dinner table, "So, Dad, what do you do?"

He said, "Well, let me give you two examples. One is a fellow called me from South Dakota"—I may have the details wrong, but the gist is—"farmer called me is there a locus plague on this landslide and if so what did they do to fix it. So Dad did some research and sure enough there was a plague, and sure enough, the army had mixed some arsenic in the pesticides. It was right on his land, and the man was being poisoned. So that was one extreme example. He said, "The other one is a woman called me and said do you have any ration stamps from World War Two?"

Dad said, "Oh yes, yes, we do. Do you want me to make you a copy of it?" He thought she was writing a book or something.

She said, "Well no, if you could just describe it to me."

He said, "Are you sure you don't want a copy?"

She said, "Well let me tell you. I'm going to a costume party as rations stamp."

Dad told her what rations stamp looked like so she could dress appropriately. So that were the two extremes of what an agricultural historian might do in a day.

MR: Then there was another very fun example. When they were having that, the farmers were going to stage a tractor rally through Washington, D.C. I don't know who the secretary was at that point in time, but they called Wayne in and said, "What should we do?" Do you remember the details?

LL: Dad researched it and presented it to the administration that in fact the farmers will not be violent probably. History shows that they won't and if they have someone to talk to their about their grievances and you know that they're very reasonable, and that they're okay, and so that's what the administration did and that's the way it worked out.

MR: So they heard out what could have been kind of a nasty situation that's because Dad, Wayne, looked it up and said let them talk to somebody. That was all they wanted really. So yeah, he was good. (laughs) He was good in his field I think.

TH: I think there's another person that I haven't read a lot about, Gladys Baker?

MR: Yes, she was a colleague of Wayne's and very close in touch. She was great. She's the one I went to work for actually when Wayne was in the army and she was a great person. I'm...certified old me, and had little quotes and stuff. She was big help in lots of lots of ways. But she developed Alzheimer's which was very, very sad to see. Wayne and I would take her out to this special restaurant which she loved, Mrs. Kay's Tavern (unintelligible). We were living in Virginia at that time. We'd take her every Sunday. Well she enjoyed it and so did we. But then it got so that she was (unintelligible) because every step of the way she'd repeat lines. She'd say oh so and so this there, I've been there, all the way out. Then she'd forget a lot of stuff. Eventually one Sunday we went up to her apartment once. It was a very swank place that she lived in but that place was so strewn. The floors were totally covered with papers and magazine. You had to brush off the chairs to sit down. It was wicked. She was losing it totally. Then one Sunday she came up of the apartment, walking in her bathrobe ready to go to Mrs. Kay's. So, eventually, her brother, Raymond Clater, who was very, very wealthy, fortunately, realized the situation and started paying to her and (unintelligible).

TH: As I understand it too, Gladys, in her prime, or in her years before, wasn't she a protégé of Henry Wallace?

MR: Oh, yes.

LL: And I think it was because I think Raymond made his money with Henry Wallace in developing the hybrid corn.

MR: Yes, in fact I think Daddy and I took some stock out of that for a while anyway.

LL: And I found a letter in Dad's papers from Henry Wallace to Gladys, type written out. An article I think that she had written, and that was very interesting.

MR: Yes, and we would take Gladys, when she was well. And a lot of it was with Henry when nice things were going on. We've got a picture of her standing in the Cosmic's Club driveway with Wayne. The Cosmic's Club was one of these intellectual types of clubs with dancing in Washington, D.C. Wayne made it, you had to be sponsored but his former professor Howard

Merlin I spoke of, and another one, Rena Fox, sponsored him. I thin, he got in with no problem. He was instrumental in getting women to get in to the club through the prying of our other daughter Karen. "Dad do ladies get invited? Are they members?"

"No, no."

Well, she went into our whole 12-year-old "Well that's not fair!" At one point in time the women had to go through a separate door. So Wayne was instrumental in getting women admitted, and blacks admitted to the club. So we felt he did very nice things.

TH: He did very nice things. He also had some interesting long term friends through the years and the one that comes to mind is Mike Mansfield.

MR: Oh yes, of course.

TH: Who he met here originally in a student-professor relationship. So tell me anything you remember about that. I noticed that Senator Mansfield, at that time, even wrote a letter to Wayne on his retirement.

MR: He did, he wrote a beautiful letter and there was a second letter that he sent. Wayne had it, taken and put away. It was a special symposium in Wade's honor and Mike wrote a letter congratulating him on that which was wonderful. Wade treasured that, he had it carefully it away in a special file. So yeah, Wayne greatly admired Mike Mansfield. As I say, I think he started out by grading papers for Mike and then I don't know, helped in other ways.

LL: I think he worked for Mike through one of the Depression Era, job corps kind of things I believe because I know Dad wrote up his relationship on Mike, for the Mansfield Library I think a couple years ago and I believe that's what it said, "a job corps kind of thing." He applied so he was working with Mike through that. Mike would talk with students after and gather around talk politics and so on.

MR: Oh Wayne was extremely fond of Mike. Very appreciate that when Mike rose to such height, he would even take time to send such nice letters to Wayne congratulating him or whatever, praising him one way or another. So Wayne really helped, very grateful for that.

LL: I remember Paul saying that Mike Mansfield and Dad were on a walk back together in Washington in some point, I didn't know about this personally, but they somehow ended up, "Oh Wayne why don't we just throw this all in and buy a ranch in Montana" They looked at each other and laughed. (laughs)

MR: Well, I remember, not in connection with Mike, but Wayne has been offered over the years various teaching positions and rather than staying in the department and he always talked to me first and then turned it down. Well, I have no (unintelligible), hated to move all those, plus

wasn't that sure about other stores. Once he was offered a job to teach out here, and the crowning bonus was that he thought, deer hunting. But that told me that, that was it, no way. No way, Jose. Anyway, to get back to Mike, he just adored him really and thought Mike was just a prime example of what you could be.

TH: Yes, as was Dr. Rasmussen. We're nearing the end of our time, is there anything that we've missed that you would especially like to add Mrs. Rasmussen or Linda?

LL: I think in terms of health our Dad worked when we were growing up, I always remember him even without Orville Freeman asking him he'd take one day to go into the office and he loved to work. At night he's always writing a book or researching. Although he was also an avid mystery reader and would read one mystery book a night and also a stamp collector and helped with Boy Scouts and I remember one time Pierre Sallinger's son came to get his badge work with Dad, and we watched Lassie with Mrs. Sallinger or something like that. But Dad did a lot to help people. He helped African guards who were at the department. He sponsored them to be U.S. citizens. I think at that time you had to take economic responsibility—

MR: One is still in Washington and contacts me every once in a while. Godfrey O'Corral is his name but his great uncle, another nephew, and Godfrey were all sponsored by Wayne (unintelligible). They just never forget it. They said Wayne was wonderful and he was. Everyone.

LL: Everyone who met my dad just really loved him. I've never known anyone to meet him and have anything nasty to say. Everyone just loved him. Even a friend of mine who'd say, "I'm gonna go have Wayne Darshum with his Indian term where he would look at and realize being and get the greatest of him just by being with him." He used to just love to go be in my dad's presence even when he was very ill. Dad's also loyal and I think that really showed in his loyalty to Gladys and how they worked so hard together and then when she could no longer work, I believe he took her to the office every day, and took her out to lunch. He never gave up on anything; he was always right there.

MR: One person put it in a memorial they wrote about him that he was a very humble person. Extremely accomplished, but very loyal, very humble. And a gentlemen and a gentle man. And that sounds like a wonderful place to end.

TH: Thank you so much Mrs. Rasmussen and Linda.

MR: My pleasure.

LL: Thank you.

[End of Interview]