6-14-1986

# Joan Staats Oral History

Joan Staats
*The Jackson Laboratory*

**The Jackson Laboratory**
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Interviewer's Comments

Narrator's Name Dr. Joan Staats

Interviewer's observations about the interview setting, physical description of the narrator, comments on narrator's veracity and accuracy, and candid assessment of the historical value of the memoir.

NOTE: Use parentheses () to enclose any words, phrases or sentences that should be regarded as confidential.

The Lab's librarian for over 25 years, Staats, by her own admission, is "regressive," i.e. a conservative and then some. She clearly venerated C.C. Little and her feeling comes through on this tape. She also deeply respected George Snell, both as a scientist and a person. She offers several hilarious anecdotes of Snell, ever the "absent-minded" professor. She also corroborates Green's account of moving the library, but offers little further detail. In fact, this whole interview, c. 80 minutes in length, is thin in detail, although Staats presumably recalls many of the noteworthy incidents--mouse races, the Hoxie party, the different Directorial styles etc.,--that are the stuff of vivid anecdote.

Staats has strong views, few of which she put on tape. She remembers the early '50's at the Lab, its "family" atmosphere and sense of common purpose, with great nostalgia, and sees the opening of the separate animal resource facility, Morrill Park, as the beginning of the end of the "family" feeling, since it meant new Lab employees could be strangers to workers at the other facility.

This tape has value for confirming the validity of other tapes. Its guarded tone and content render it less useful than some of the others for getting a sense of the Lab's atmosphere. Staats is reliable, but not very forthcoming.

14 June 1986
Date

Susan Mehrtens
Interviewer's name

THE JACKSON LABORATORY / BAR HARBOR, MAINE
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Place W. Tremont, Me.

Date 6/10/86

Joan Staats
Narrator

Susan Whitney
for the Laboratory

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Ms. Joan Staats

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The Jackson Laboratory
INTERVIEW DATA SHEET

This section is to be completed by the Interviewer.

Narrator Dr Joan Staats Address Day Point Rd West Thermont Me 04690 Phone 207 244 7116
Birthdate _____ Birthplace _____ Interviewer Dr Susan Mehrtens Phone 207 244 7353
Date(s) & Place(s) of Interview(s) 10 June 1986 West Thermont
Collateral Material Yes ____ No X Terms unrestricted

Complete each of these sections as the tape is processed in each step.

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| | None | Begun | Number of pages | Total time | Catalogued | Audited | Begun | Total time | To narrator | Returned | Reread | Preface | Begun | Text finished | Index, Table of Contents | Proofread | Corrected | Transcript sent | Transcript returned | Tape sent | Tape returned | | |

**The Jackson Laboratory**
Oral History Collection

Collateral Materials Report

Narrator's Name Staats

Collateral materials, whether originals or copies, enhance the value of an oral history memoir. Ask the narrator if you may borrow or keep such things as personal photographs, newspaper clippings, pages from a diary, and other mementos. Borrowed materials can be photographed or duplicated and then returned.

List and describe all acquisitions below. A typical description might be "Copy of letter from Governor Henry Horner to James L. Singleton, February 29, 1937." Provide as much identifying information for each photograph as possible. Each photograph should be labeled on its back as well as listed below.

1. None

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This is the tape of an oral history interview of Ms. Joan Staats, given as part of the Jackson Laboratory Oral History Project, sponsored by the Acadia Institute. This interview was held on June 10, 1986 in Ms. Staats home on Dix Point Road in West Tremont, Maine. The interviewer was Dr. Susan E. Mehrtens.

SM: How was it that you ever heard of the Jackson Lab? How did you wind up here?

JS: Well, it's not too long a story. In 1949, in August, a friend suggested to me that we take our vacation in Maine. Well, I didn't know where Maine was, but I found out. I was from Illinois and I had never been this far East. I'd never seen an ocean. It wasn't here actually it was across the bay in Winter Harbor. And after one week here in this area I said, "I am going to live on the coast of Maine." That was in August of '49 and in October I moved up here.

SM: You just moved up here without a job?

JS: Oh no, I'm not that courageous. During our stay we had driven past something called the Jackson Laboratory, which I had never heard of. So when I decided I was going to live here I did know where the University of Maine was and I wrote to them and said, "Here I am, you know, I will teach comparative anatomy for you, I will teach zoology, I will teach..." Well, they didn't bother to answer. So I thought, "Well, there was the Jackson

Laboratory; I wonder what they do. Well, if they're a Laboratory they must have animals, I'm good with animals." So I wrote to the Jackson Laboratory that evening. They did write back and said, "Well we don't have anything like that in mind or available, but we need a librarian." And as I had said a few weeks before, "I will do anything to live on the coast of Maine." So I spent the rest of my life as a librarian.

SM: What an amazing story.

JS: That's how I got here and that's how I got to the Jackson Laboratory never having heard of it.

SM: You had a background primarily in science as opposed to library--

JS: Entirely in science.

SM: Well, it's probably better--I mean it's easier for a scientist to learn library stuff, I would think, than it is for a librarian to learn science stuff.

JS: That is what the librarian search committee thought, and that's the way it turned out.

SM: So they were actually looking for a librarian at the time?

JS: Yeah, they were looking for a librarian with a science background.

SM: Then you must have come here with quite a lot of stuff to learn in terms of the formation of a library and the

maintenance of a library and cataloging procedures.

JS: I went on learning for 35 years. I had a good teacher for two weeks.

SM: For two weeks, for two weeks?

JS: Mmmm hmmm, my predecessor Nancy Brainerd, quite a gal. And she worked days and evenings trying to drill things into my head and it all worked out. I learned a lot (I'm a pretty good learner).

SM: What was the library like at the time, was it--it wasn't as large--

JS: At the time, I have to tell you what the building was like at the time. What is now called Unit 4 was Orange Girders in the Sky and the whole Lab was crowded, sitting in each others' laps in Units 1, 2, and 3 and (they had at the end a great big crosswise) and that had just been started a year before. So the library was in what was designed as a washroom--a box washroom, and there were temporary wooden shelves maybe six of them and a desk and a great big sink and that was it. By that time, I think it was '49, the foundation for Unit 4 was in and the structural steel was up and that was the big time consuming thing, so the shell went up rather quickly. So in January of 1950 I moved, I was the first to move into the new wing. There were so few books, Katrina Hummel and I moved the library one weekend and the new library, which--I don't know how well you know the

Lab--the wing that is Eva Eicher's, from that out to the main hall was the library. And to me it was immense, frightening--all this space was mine--

SM: To fill.

JS: --to fill, and fill it we did. Very fast I should say, we finally had to build another one.

SM: The moving for that I suspect was somewhat more arduous.

JS: Yuh, yuh, but it was fun too. Someday you should see the movie that was made of moving the library.

SM: A movie?

JS: The staff movie.

SM: Oh, the staff moved--I see, oh my goodness. And you didn't lose anything? I would think that would lend itself to, you know, where did the Journal of Morphology go?

JS: No, I had my track shoes on, I was back and forth from the old library to the new one. I had worked for weeks and weeks measuring every book in the collection, marking the new shelves, saying the journal of so-and-so goes here, every shelf was marked. And so most of the staff did it very well; some thought it was a big joke, they put things anyplace they pleased. It was some different from Katrina and I moving everything on a Saturday.

SM: Now, that was how many years between the two moves?

JS: Well, I moved in January of 1950 to Unit 4. And I think the second move was in '71. The library, what I now call the

old library, was planned to last ten years, which is standard library planning. Planned not by me, by my predecessor.

SM: It did better than that.

JS: It lasted 21 years. Of course I had stuff all over the building in dead storage, it was terrible. So I planned the new library--planned it for ten years, it's now gone fifteen.

SM: It seems like there's still room, I mean shelf space.

JS: There are always little ways of making more room, trick of the trade. Let's see--

SM: So now, did you ever regret not being in science still--

JS: Yes, I did.

SM: --was it satisfying to be--

JS: I went through a period of being very unhappy, thought I had wasted all those years of college and graduate school and, you know, "What the hell, anybody could be a librarian, what was so great about that?" But then a friend, not here, showed me that it was a pretty damn great thing to be a good medical librarian. So I got over it and the rest has been great.

JS: Was the Lab supportive of you in terms of going to conferences and learning techniques and--

JS: Yes, yes. The Medical Library Association met in Minneapolis two weeks ago, that's the first time in 27 years that I wasn't there. That hurt, but it only hurt me.

SM: So now, when you arrived on the scene C.C. Little was

still the Director right?

JS: Oh yes, oh very much so.

SM: What was he like, what was his--

JS: I think he was, in many ways, the greatest man I ever met. I can't say much more than that. We were talking before about the changes which occurred, particularly under change of administration. When I came to the Lab, Prexy was within 7 years of retirement and he was away a lot, he was off raising money. He was a very good at that.

SM: So I have heard.

JS: And so he was away an awful lot and as a result, partly as a result, the Lab was pretty much run by the staff--by the scientific staff. And then in '56 Prexy retired and Earl came. And to say it was a change is quite an understatement. A lot of the staff didn't take very kindly to having a 24-hour-a-day, present, active, strong, director because .....

SM: Now, was the size about the same in the two times--that is under Little and under Green, the size hadn't increased to the point that you had to have a lot more administration had it?

JS: No.

SM: It was just differences of style.

JS: Yes, there were a lot of differences in style actually. Every wall, every cupboard, everything was gray, there was only

one color in the room--gray, everything was gray. .... what it looks like now, bright, cheerful. Times have changed too.

SM: So if a staff person wanted to have his office painted mauve or black and gray--

JS: Heresy! Maybe if he paid to do himself he could have done it, I don't know about that. The staff couldn't have telephones. You hadn't heard about that? This would be distracting.

SM: To have a telephone? What did you do if you had a phone call?

JS: The phone was in the hall.

SM: In the hall?

JS: Yeah, and there was a squawk box system so when you had a phone call you would call over the squawk box. "Dr. Snell you're wanted on the telephone." He would trot out into the hall and pick up the telephone. I had a telephone because I ran a service department. So people would come in and use my phone all the time.

SM: Now, did the staff, I mean did anybody complain about this?

JS: Oh, yes, yeah and gradually it just broke down. There were people who really, because of work responsibilities needed a telephone. George Snell was one, he had so much contact with the outside world and he developed special strains of mice, he supplied people with mice. And he really did

need a telephone, there's no doubt about that, and some other people did too. Before there was Morrell Park, all the shipping, raising, everything was done at the Main Lab. Well, the people who had to deal in any way with customers had to have a telephone, and this included some of the scientists who raised the mice. So gradually phones crept into offices, but it's hard to remember that.

SM: Sure, no one's ever said that yet, ..... So did Prexy help you get oriented at all to the Lab, or did he remain a rather shadowy figure.

JS: Oh no, no. He was always very friendly really--well, anything I needed I would go to Katrina Hummel, she was Chairman of the Library Committee and very, very supportive. But if there was anything about which Katrina might be out of touch, I could go to Prexy anytime. Anybody could go to Prexy, but it was very difficult because he was away so much.

SM: But you see this was the day before--well, I guess '49, '50 would just be about the time that the big Washington Federal agencies were beginning to fund, make grants for--

JS: It was beginning about then, but it was only a beginning. Of course the Lab had two of the first three grants that were given. And Prexy helped set up the current review system. But mainly it was private money, some foundations, awful lot of personal checkbooks.

SM: He was very fortunate with money.

JS: Well, he had the background.

SM: So all this time you were setting up the library. What sort of a collection had you been left by the woman before?

JS: Well, she had started--she was very able, just out of library school, a young girl. She had started to replace some periodical holdings. She managed to get hold of maybe ten long run titles and we had subscriptions--current subscriptions many of which started in November, 1947. And some of the runs still start late '47, which were never replaced. There was money from the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. And they built the new library and there was $40,000 left over from building the new library and that was invested and the income was used to buy the periodicals, and it still is.

SM: When--did they have a lot of reprints at that time or were you the one that got the idea--

JS: No, after the fire the Lab advertised in Science and Genetics and all the periodicals that our gang reads asking for these and they arrived and it began the nucleus of today's 48,000. And that is a unique resource, it's not as important today as it used to be because of the electronic transmission of information. But it's still important, it is in many senses an historical library as well as a current working library. But the reprints had been charted and papers, as I understand it, were stacked, catagorized, sorted

in Katrina Hummel's livingroom. Because space was a premium, some staff went other places to work after the fire. Margaret Dickie went to Sloan-Kettering afterwards. Nate Kaliss went down to, I think it was, Columbia. Of course Hamilton Station was unburned and a lot of the Main Lab people went out there. But space was a real big thing, some people used their livingrooms. Good cause, popular cause. In those days and for quite a few years after I came to the Lab, the Laboratory was a family, which unfortunately it is not today. We did everything together, a Lab party might be every employee, every mouse changer, as well as every administrator.

SM: And how many people would that be?

JS: Well, there were 18 staff--altogether it might have been 100 maybe, I doubt it was very many.

SM: And do you think Prexy was responsible for the family atmosphere or just the scientific end.

JS: Both. You couldn't do that today for many reasons. One; it's too large and another; it's too divided, physically divided, which leads to emotional and psychological conditions. And that happened when Morrell Park was built, so all of a sudden there was we and them.

SM: And you were here at the time of the building of that weren't you?

JS: Oh yeah. The main building at Morrell Park is an

enormous brick wall thing. And when it was being put up one of the huge long brick walls was up and we had a hell of a storm--

SM: And it fell down?

JS: Down it went.

SM: That delayed it, didn't it?

JS: Yeah.

SM: At the time it was built, people must have been looking forward to it, weren't they?

JS: Yes, yes, a lot of people were. The people who went down to work in the mouse rooms were all trained at the Main Lab and had been working there. Everybody was looking forward to it, it was something new, something adventuresome. And that whole Morrell Park was built without one penny of federal money.

SM: Earl Green gave me the details of that.

JS: The Rockefeller brother's trust.

SM: That's right, yeah. But nobody at the time thought it would lead to a physical division?

JS: Well, I can't answer that; I didn't. And I think the people that trained at the Main Lab and went down to the Park to work didn't think so either. We were all still friends and I think it probably dates from the day the first person was hired to work in Morrell Park who had not been to the Main Lab, that was the beginning. So it continued from

there, and that led eventually to all the union nonsense and that was a very troubling time.

SM: You were at the Lab still at that time. Now, what in essence was going on? People were discontent and didn't feel the administration was being responsive?

JS: Yeah, they felt like second class citizens. They didn't like a lot of their working conditions. And some jobs do take place in unsatisfactory conditions, that's life. Some places are too hot, some are too cold, but it all builds up. An inch looks like nothing, put 12 together--a foot, probably. So the whole lot of little things plus people that I regard as trouble makers, like all the SDS types.

SM: Agitators. How many of the people that were agitating for a union were real old timers?

JS: I don't think anybody.

SM: That's the sort of question I was getting. The old timers remember the other way, so that unions were just unthinkable. Watson Robbins, Allen Salisbury, and Frank Clark talked about working 18 hours and thinking nothing of it. And never even thinking a thought that they might get additional pay. A totally different concept.

JS: That led to the set up of the family environment, not only in little personal ways, but in professional ways. One of the strengths of the Laboratory has always been that it is not--has not been departmentalized. Now, you might be an

immunologist and in the next office might be a pathologist and there is nothing stopping you from going next door and saying, "Gee, I've got a little problem here." And so you solve the problem. I think that's been, over the years, one of the very strong points of the Laboratory--the availability of other expertise, other techniques, other fields--that's it.

SM: Some of the scientists insist that the location is such, with the University of Maine quite a ways away and any other kind of real scientists are even farther away than that, that you really have to depend on each other. Because if you really--unless you wanted to get on the phone with somebody, but if you have a problem right in the Lab you really have to depend on your co-workers. And they did not regard that as a negative thing, they regarded the location as a positive thing because it did force more colleagiality and inter-departmental or interdisciplinary communication.

JS: Yeah, the location is fortunate I think, either for the right reasons or the wrong reasons. In fact the original reason may or may not have been valid. Here you would be stuck out on an island without the distractions of big city life, civilization, plus the fact that Prexy plunked us down on a hunk of radioactive granite was immaterial, he didn't know it in those days.

SM: And then what was so funny was their attitude about the time that they brought in radioisotopes and everyone at the Lab thought that this could be so dangerous, do you remember the circumstances in that?

JS: I remember some of the fights at staff meetings.

SM: What would they fight about?

JS: Because it was so dangerous.

SM: Oh, they did, they said it was a risk?

JS: Oh yeah, yes. Radioactivity was a bad word among Lab scientists.

SM: So how did they get, I mean everybody is in this stuff now.

JS: Finally the pros won out, were allowed to get very small quantities of quite innocuous type isotopes. But not in the Main Lab, in another building down there. And then everybody got used to it after a while and it's spreading out.

SM: People could see they weren't going to cause mutations in the stocks of mice and stuff.

JS: More than that, they were worried about having deformed babies.

SM: Oh I see, they were worried about their own person.

JS: Now the only stricture, as far as I know, that's still enforced is that you can't have your lunch in the same refrigerator as the isotope. Maybe that's no longer true, I don't know.

SM: It sounds like a typically scientific lab sort of thing, you put your lunch in a refrigerator with scientific stuff.

JS: Oh sure, here's your little brown bag with your lunch and here's a little brown bag of dead mice. There's nothing wrong with that.

SM: Yes, ha ha ha. I see well, but it was funny, you know, how they would react to something like that, to bringing radioisotopes into the Lab. Do you remember other things that were debated innovations, or--

JS: Oh, somebody wanted to bring ectromelia virus into the Lab. You've heard that word? of that disease?

SM: I've heard of the ectromelia virus-it's like whoooooaaa. Why?

JS: To study it.

SM: Oh my goodness.

JS: Cooler heads prevailed.

SM: Wow, what a nightmare. I have heard the word used in reference to their animal health reform when they were building Morrell Park and their concern that that could wipe out their mouse colony.

JS: As it did,- it has in Europe many times in many laboratories and even in this country like NIH. And that's why nothing is imported into the Lab. If somebody wants some new mice of some kind they go through a quarantine that you wouldn't believe. One time one strain was imported and it

took so long to pass those things through quarantine that by the time they were released to the staff member who had requested them they were too old to breed. The strain was later imported again, successfully. But that was nothing foolish, that wasn't like radioisotopes. This was a very real concern and it still is, because our mice are not vaccinated. You can vaccinate them against this, some think it's easier, so they never have it, but you know damn well that they're carrying it.

SM: Now, the Jax mice are not vaccinated because that could be--

JS: When you vaccinate anything, yourself or a mouse, there are changes maybe in some tiny subtle ways. Well, it's like when a diet is changed, any diet for any strain is changed for any reason. This is widely publicized to our customers, we're going to change the diet, change mice you are using. And we are so proud and so jealous of our reputation, which is so high and so hard earned that we bend over backwards to protect it. One time some mice were shipped and it was later found that they weren't the right mice. It was in the State of Michigan, the mice were healthy and all that, but they weren't the right kind. And so the word went out to those customers by telephone the very first available minute. "You did not get what you ordered; you can replace them."

SM: Did they try to track down, in the shipping room, how

that mix up had occurred?

JS: Oh yes. And more than once it was discovered that a mutation had occurred in a particular strain. And that is laboriously traced back and all the descendants from that point traced on and ..... ..... .....

SM: Incredible.

JS: It is, it's really incredible.

SM: It must be incredible just to catch a mutation, unless it's something obvious like a white coat.

JS: Yeah, well some are easy; some are entirely missed, I'm sure. I'm sure there are chemical mutations that the effect is so minimal that they are not found, and everything in between.

SM: Now, when you went around--when you were creating the Jackson Lab Library, in an extensive sense, did the staff give you any help? In the sense of guidance as to what sort of things you should buy?

JS: Yes, oh yes, I was always reaching out. I had complete lists of library holdings before the fire. Now, what survived the fire were about 50 volumes which were in the bindery in those days. That was the library; 50 books. But I had lists of holdings from years back, and Nancy Brainerd before me and then I kept polling the staff; sending around lists--(pick an obvious one; Journal of Heredity)--should we replace this? Was this

priority "A"? Should we not replace it? Should we replace it on an available basis, and so on. All these things, we went through all of that to get these back. And then it was a question of what was available, like Journal of Heredity still isn't complete. It's not serious because the very early volumes, I think it's the first four volumes we have now. Some things were easy to replace, some were very difficult, some were extremely expensive. But we had the Ladies Auxiliary money and we got a lot of gifts, people with libraries with triplicate sets, that kind of a gift, retiring scientists, which is something that has gone on since the beginning of the world and will continue to go on until the end of the world; the retiring scientist syndrome, they give everything to the library, whether we want it or not.

SM: Now, has this still been true, that in years after the fire both--even currently say, the library is the recipient of gifts. How has this collection grown? Because my understanding is; the Lab has been pretty much supported by scientists with their particular grants, but that wouldn't build the library.

JS: That's true, there is a catagory of Laboratory funds, I

don't know what they call it know, we used to call it general funds. And that came from donations, surplus money from the sale of mice, any non-grant or non-contract fund, and probably supported the library. Because in those days grant money was not permitted to support a library. Then it changed somewhat. But it was general funds of the Laboratory, in the beginning, of course, usually you've got ..... money. It was great. But what took $40,000 bringing in today in relation to cost of periodicals, it would be impossible. Then we had book plates made, Ladies Auxiliary of Veterans of Foreign Wars, and put them in the ....., which was paid for by the ladies money. And every year the National President of the VFW Auxiliary would visit the Laboratory and be shown around by the Director and always brought into the Library and I always trotted out some of these books, and I have yet to see one impressed. They just didn't seem to care.

SM: But they gave you money. Did you ever have any notable Trustees that were particularly interested in the library? In the sense of giving you marketing money for it or...?

JS: Not in a sense of money, no. Trustees do give a lot of money, but not specifically to the library. But a lot of them had personal interest in the library. One right now is Will Silvers. Dorothea Bennett had been interested in the library.

When the new library was dedicated, it was held in the library, which at that time was completed but there was no furniture, no stacks, no nothing. So it was a big empty beautiful room. The Governor of the State was there--Curtis,and Leonard Carmichael speaking for the Trustees. And it was a great day.

SM: Now, was Little there?

JS: I don't think he was.

SM: It was just about the time of his death wasn't it?

JS: I think it was '71. You'd think I'd know.

SM: It seems to me it was quite close together that he died and that the new wing was finished.

JS: I know that Bea was there, Elizabeth, if anybody was

..... ..... .....

SM: Yes, I know. What were some of the rewards you've had

working at the Lab? Obviously the feeling of family and the intellectual stimulation.

JS: The island, you know, I think I'd do anything to live on the coast of Maine. So that was a very, very large plus, I don't care for the city, I was born in Chicago. Dear friends, another big plus, some here, some not. A chance for professional growth and development in the medical library field. And I think I made a fairly substantial contribution to the library and to the Medical Library Association.

SM: What was the advantages of that? Did the Association give you a Fellowship?

JS: Yeah, this is something they do for people that have done a lot for the association over the years who are or about to be retired. So it was a stunning surprise. It was a beautiful tribute. Well, the one thing the Laboratory did over the years was support me.

SM: Sounds like it did in a variety of ways, not just one, you know, financial.

JS: Yes, mmmmm hmmmm. I even bought a house from the Lab.

SM: How was that.

JS: I used to live on lower Main Street in Bar Harbor and the Lab at one time owned Aldersea, which was a big summer cottage and the house that I bought was the caretaker's and I bought it from the Lab.

SM: How was it that they eventually sold all that? I know

they sold Aldersea eventually.

JS: Oh yes, Aldersea was sold to Stockton Andrews at least 20 years ago.

End Of Side One.

JS: There was a proposal for a staff housing, enclaves, building more houses along with the big house, Aldersea. But over the years the Lab apparently had not put one penny into it. It was in terrible shape. And the staff mainly did not go along with the idea of a little Laboratory colony--little to most normal people. So eventually the decision was made, and I think by the Trustees, to get out of the real estate business. So Aldersea was sold, I think 18 acres, and then my little piece 2 1/3 acres with the house on it was rented to a staff member for quite a few years. And after that to the cook that came in the summer for the students. And they decided to get rid of it, and I bought it.

SM: Is that one reason why they got rid of Hamilton Station too? They wanted to get out of the real estate business?

JS: No, no that was different. That wasn't in the same category, that was a working part of the Laboratory. But then Dr. Little retired and it was his program that started back in '45, something like that, and then added to his program of genetics of dogs and cats. There was a behavior program of dogs, mainly dogs, some sheep. Psychologically inclined persons worked there and the other

big contribution out there was Dr. Sawin and his rabbits. Well, various things happened, time went by, Dr. Little retired, Dr. Sawin retired, Dick Fox took over the rabbits, Paul Scott left to go to Bowling Green, John Fuller left, after being down at the Main Lab several years. So it kind of dried up, all except for the rabbits and they eventually phased out, just a few years ago. So it was a first among the scientific community, we had inbred rabbits. They were pretty hard to top. So gradually that property outlived its purpose; that was why it was sold. But it was never held in the sense of being in the real estate business like some of the properties were.

SM: Now Highseas, the other place that I've seen that they have, that's used in the summer--that's for the summer program right?

JS: That's right, there are conferences held there. That's changed over the years, it used to be the residence for the high school age students. And a lot of their work was carried on there. And then, due to a combination of factors a few years ago it housed all of the students. And those buildings down below the library, the little jagged edged ones, housed the college people for several years. I don't know what the plans are for those buildings, if they don't use them, pretty soon they're going to tear them down.

SM: Well apparently, I mean talking with people just this

morning who were planning to come up here for the summer, I know at least two; Arthur Champlin and Will Silvers plan to live in those buildings.

JS: Do they? Good for them.

SM: I mean this would be a week or two weeks, this is not going to be any lengthy--

JS: In those buildings? Good for them. Art may have lived there as a student.

SM: I think he did, yes.

JS: I don't think Will ever did.

SM: I don't know though, he was in the summer student program.

JS: Maybe, he was a student in what '50, '49, there's been a lot of things go by.

SM: Who of all the people, besides Prexy Little, who of all the people has impressed you most in terms of--

JS: As what?

SM: Either in terms of science or a character, well I guess Allen Salisbury impresses everybody as the biggest character, but in terms say in science.

JS: George Snell.

SM: What was it that was impressive, the fact that he could work so long on such a project, that he was so determined?

JS: The benefit is he's so damn bright, he's such a methodical planner, he has long range plans, I expect he'll

know what he's doing in the year 2010. And where his garden will be growing, in what spot. He's all these things, he's got the brilliant methodical mind and he is such a marvelous human being, it's that combination. We have had people at the Lab whom I thought were brilliant scientists, whom I absolutely couldn't stand. Scientists, hundreds of them, human beings-zero, but George had it all.

SM: What do you think about the policy that in effect sort of forced him into retirement?

JS: Well, I think that's a mistake; on the other hand that's what the policy was at that time. And I'm not an administrator, but I think it would be very difficult to break the policy for one individual.

SM: I don't know that the Lab actually was the one, the way George explained it, it's just federal granting systems--

JS: Oh yes, that too.

SM: In a way, of course, he could see the point-of-view that you have to move over and let the young guys come through who have careers to make, you know, to start. But it just seems so tragic that at the magic age of 65 you have--

JS: I know, something that ..... ..... .....

SM: Because it's obvious that George has been going strong for almost a decade now.

JS: Oh, sure. Charmed man.

SM: Do you recall any memorable events or mishaps? Funny

stories, the moving of the library of course was some memorable event.

JS: Oh yes, I remember, I have some good George Snell stories. Well, I'll put them in, I can take them out later if I want. I told you that the staff didn't have telephones in the early days, so if you wanted to call someone you went out in the hall to some hall telephone and got the switchboard and said, "I want to talk to so and so." And then so and so was paged and went to his nearest hall telephone and you had your conversation. Well, one day Elizabeth Fekete was calling George Snell. Elizabeth was not on her usual floor, so the squawk box said, "Dr. Snell, Dr. Fekete wants you on the telephone." So George went to his nearest telephone, he opened the phone booth door and there stood Elizabeth. And he said, "Excuse me I'm wanted on the telephone," and closed the door. Good story, a little absent minded. Such a wonderful man. Then there was one time that George had a visitor at the Lab. It got to be whatever hours we worked in those days, five o'clock. Whoever was the visitor's host came to claim him and George said, "When we're finished, I'll take him into town." So they sat and talked and sometime later they concluded this conversation and walked out into the parking lot and George said, "Oh, I brought my bicycle today."

SM: Oh no! Oh dear! I hope the visitor had a very comfortable pair of shoes on.

JS: The story always stops right there.

SM: George has always reminded me when I look at him of Dr. Seuss.

JS: Yes, a little.

SM: Fay Lawson tells the story of how she came up here as a--she had gotten out of college and had been interviewed by Meredith Runner for a job and then it was several months between the time she interviewed and the time she actually came up. And so she's sitting in the lobby the day she arrives on the scene waiting for Dr. Runner, she's sitting there looking around, there's no sign of Runner. Well, this woman comes walking, sort of shuffling through the lobby in an old white coat full of holes, so Fay looks and figures ah, the cleaning woman. So this woman comes by and sits down on the bench next to her and starts talking. And in an instant she knew this was no cleaning woman, so they talk some and it turns out this woman is going to be her supervisor, that Runner didn't have space in his lab. So the woman introduces herself as Elizabeth Russell, Fay doesn't ..... Then they talk a little bit more and then Fay says, "Are you Dr. E.S. Russell, all of whose papers I have read in the past?" And she said, "Yes." So that was how she met Tibby, she thought she was the cleaning

lady. And if you think of Tibby in her usual outfit, and then the old lab coat full of holes. Telling that story I can see it happening.

JS: After that she came up here to work for Runner.

SM: Initially see, and then I guess it was three or four months between the time she was first interviewed and the time that she actually arrived, and in that interval apparently he didn't have room, but Tibby did. That's how it started and of course.....

JS: Tibby always did her own thing anyway. Lab coats have been another kind of odd thing over the years—how styles have changed, not styles of lab coats, but styles of administrative ..... The present library, the new library is a public area, that is it's accessible to people off the street. So it is not a clean area, so you are not allowed to wear your lab coat, because you might pick up a stray germ and take it to a mouse room in the Lab. And that was not true in the old library, which was in the heart of the research area and not accessible to the general public. Well, I had a little trouble with that, with enforcing it. Old habits die hard. That's not what I started out to say. The method of where you could wear a lab coat, what kind of a lab coat you had to wear, what day you had to change it, how you had to mark it with your name, where to put your name, what kind of letters, we never did have the stitched ones

that some places have. This kept changing, not only under different Directors, but under the same Director at different times. And it was one of these little irritating things that doesn't amount to a hill of beans. But--

SM: Well, there were apparently many of such things.

JS: One of those inches added on.

SM: Well, many, many people tell anecdotes of some of these sorts of rules and regulations. How the grass had to be mowed in a counterclockwise fashion, as opposed to a clockwise fashion. And how Watson Robbins got hauled on the carpet because the man was mowing in a clockwise fashion, when it said in the rule book that it had to be in a counterclockwise fashion. Everybody justs laughs now.

JS: There are a lot of things like that.

SM: But I can appreciate how you'd have a clean area and a not so clean area, I would never myself have thought along those lines, but I can see how--

JS: Oh, yes they feared ectromelia. There were a lot of other diseases, but that's the worst. That's why Morrell Park was built with a clean corridor in the middle and a dirty corridor on the other side. Everything is fed in through the clean corridor and taken out through the dirty corridor. Even that's old fashioned and kind of out of date by now, though it might take another year. But it was for its time, high-tech. Nobody had anything like that, now

it's old hat.

SM: Now, as the librarian were you allowed to go to different rooms in the lab?

JS: In the early days everybody went every place.

SM: Now, do animals in general carry this ectromelia or is it just mice?

JS: Its common name is mouse pox. It's one of the pox family of viruses, like small pox and chicken pox. But this was the death of the mice.

SM: I know they have a questionaire--

JS: That's not just laboratory mice--

SM: It's mice in general.

JS: --it's mice outside your window too. So there's always been a big thing about strays in the Lab. The fear of mice getting in from the outside. Some of them might carry it and not only that but they could have fleas, worms, all manner of .....

SM: Initially they seem to be quite (cavalier) about it, because they tell these stories of the mice races in the corridor and these were mice that they were using.

JS: These are family stories, these aren't supposed to get out.

SM: No, but I mean--

JS: Then there was Jimmy Russell, Jimmy's the youngest, who made little parachutes and dropped mice out of second story windows.

SM: As people were going under the windows?

JS: No, just to see if they'd land all right. At one time we had, it was always mostly mice, but we had a rat colony and a hamster colony in the Main Lab before Morrell Park was built, before some of the outbuildings were built. And we've all had dead animals at one time or another. And it wasn't until after Prexy retired, I'm sure, that Earl started to toughen up regulations a little. And finally it evolved with a lot of push from animal health that you could no longer go into any mouse room but your own. Unless you went through a whole elaborate procedure. And people like me couldn't come into any mouse room, where I had no business anyway.

SM: Did that bother you though, I mean that didn't give you very easy access to do things, did it? Or were you able to go into peoples' labs if you wanted to--

JS: Yes, if I needed to see someone I could locate them by telephone, whether they had a phone or not.

SM: That story of George interrupting Elizabeth of whom he wants to speak is just an incredible story.

JS: I doubt he remembers that.

SM: Well, he remembers coming to Bar Harbor in 1937 and

inquiring of a local person where the Jackson Lab was. And he said the locals refered to it as the "mouse house." Oh, you mean the mouse house, that's outside of town down the road.

JS: Uh huh, there was a lot of, well I don't know, in 1937 I don't know what it was like then, but certainly by 1950 and later there was a lot of town-gown feeling. A lot of (antagonists)--

SM: Really? Why?

JS: --to the Laboratory by the town. I don't really know why. I can think of a lot of possibilities. One is that all the top brass types were from away, a lot of mean feelings. You'd hear a lot of things like, "If they found a cure for cancer out there they'd never admit it because they'd all lose their jobs." You'd actually hear things like that.

SM: Has that changed some now?

JS: Oh, I think it's changed altogether.

SM: Because the Lab employs so many local people.

JS: The Lab even then was important to the economy. Of course right after the fire the Lab was not as important to the economy as it is now. I don't know how much that's changed since ..... was here.

SM: Now did you live in Bar Harbor, you didn't live over here until recently?

JS: No, I lived in various places in Bar Harbor. In those

days the greatest majority of the assistants and the clerical types lived in Bar Harbor and there was a bus, an ancient green bus with an oil stove in the middle aisle, and that went around town and picked people up and took them to work. And in the winter, when that oil stove was going, the fumes were so bad that they'd all try to open the windows to get rid of the fumes and get the cold in, which was preferable to the god awful oil stove.

SM: That's awful, when did they retire that thing?

JS: Oh, it wasn't in use too long. We got a better bus after that.

SM: Well, there still is a Jax bus I think it covers a much wider territory, I've seen them even on the backside of the island.

JS: Oh, that was started about 4 or 5 years ago with the Cyr Bus Co. There were three buses, three routes. It still may be, although I think it's being phased out, if it's not already. There were two routes on the island and one to Ellsworth. The Laboratory paid for half the cost of that program and the riders paid half. It's really terrific.

SM: Yes it is, it's wonderful.

JS: I never rode in it, partly because I never worked those hours. I got to work before the bus and left after it.

SM: Now, did you set your own hours?

JS: Yuh, mmmm hmmm. Within reasonable limits, you know, I

used to get to work about quarter past seven and I'd work until four or four thirty, this was after the hours changed. They used to work on Saturday morning, this was way back when-- I think it was an hour and a half, which is the dumbest thing.

SM: Why was that?

JS: I don't really know. I remember one question in here about something in gender science. The Laboratory always paid men more than women.

SM: Really? Oh my goodness.

JS: For doing the same job. This was just understood because the men had families to support.

SM: And they just assumed that women didn't.

JS: The fact that many women had families to support had nothing to do with it. But this was not hidden or secretive; this was just a fact of life. Men were paid more than women.

SM: And how did the women take that, did they just sit and--

JS: Any job was better than no job. I assume that's no longer true.

SM: I've been told that they have done an extensive study, not only of the exact same job, say research associate or something like that, but jobs throughout the Lab that might have the same level of skills.

JS: Yes, I remember the survey.

SM: What, was this a few years ago?

JS: Mmmmm hmmmm.

SM: They did a survey of .....

JS: Mmmmm hmmmmm.

SM: What would the survey be? What would it be like? What kind of questions would they ask to try to determine this?

JS: How much responsibility you have, how many people you supervise? what is the level of education required for your job? how much supervision do you get? how much freedom do you have? a whole lot of questions like that. Then it involved tabulating it. I think a heck of a lot of money was spent on this thing.

SM: Well, as an old timer you do certainly have an interesting prespective on all of this. Now, I'm surprised from what I have heard about Prexy Little he was very progressive about women and employing women.

JS: In many ways he was very progressive; in many ways he was too far ahead of his time. On the other hand he was a Boston Brahmin... In certain ways I think it's amazing that men--people with a background like Prexy's turn out to be liberals.

SM: Now to what extent did his wife, his second wife, was her name Beatrice?

JS: Beatrice Johnson.

SM: How much influence did she have on him in--

JS: Oh, a lot.

SM: Now, she was a professional herself? Wasn't she?

JS: Yeh, she was a biology student in college and he was the President of the University, interesting situation.

SM: Was she much younger than he?

JS: Yeah, he was President and she was a student. You've never heard this story?

SM: No, I didn't know a thing. No.

JS: Oh, ask somebody else; maybe they know it better than I do.

SM: Now, in fact, some of the people, like Charity and Tibby Russell who would be funded under grants, they would be paid the same as men. I mean assuming that they got a grant to cover their salary, yes?

JS: I'm not talking about the staff.

SM: Oh, okay the people at the Lab--employed by the Lab.

JS: Yeh. People who change mice or scrub floors or...; are people we used to call general assistants. And even the research assistants had--some were male and some were female. And I believe the man was paid more. And as I say, this was nothing secret or hidden. This was just a fact, which you had a salary you didn't like, but what are you going to do about it?

SM: Do you think that any of this was part of the contributing things to the union agitation?

JS: I don't think so, I think it was all over by then, this

difference of pay. No, the union thing, the people behind it had a lot of grievances. Some real, some imagined, some blown out of proportion, and some may well have been salary, but I don't believe it was difference in salary.

SM: Part of it--some of the narrators have said to me, they felt that a lot or at least part of the union agitation was the result of rising expectations that the Green tenure had been sort of keeping a very firm lid on things. Prehn comes along and it's sort of like it's lifted off and then everybody expects pie-in-the-sky tomorrow and it wasn't coming quite that fast. And that's what led the people really to agitate impatiently.

JS: That may have been a factor in it. Certainly there was no more abrupt change and it didn't happen over night because we had an Interim Director in there, Doug Coleman, and then Rich came along and the world was turned upside down. There was no hand on the tiller.

SM: There was a hand on the tiller, but it was in the water and it was attached to a Chinese junk. And he'll tell you that right off, I mean, I've interviewed him and he said that he would much rather sail than push papers, especially papers that were telling you whether you had to mow the grass clockwise or counterclockwise. I mean he just couldn't care if the grass had even been mowed.

JS: Mmmm hmmm, he is not a born administrator, as he

realizes. Smart guy, nice guy, but a lousy Director.

SM: Yeh, he said as much. He realized after two or three years there, that this just wasn't what he wanted. He really liked to do science and he liked to supervise projects of science. And he realized this was not anything like that, this was actually pushing papers.

JS: He didn't know what administration was all about.

SM: No, not at all, but--

JS: He found out and he had sense enough to quit.

SM: People said to me though, some people said to me, that it was their perception that he would be completely different from what they had that made him attractive.

JS: Well, yes. I think that's true: We just didn't realize how far ..... ..... is gone. Well, Sue--

SM: Let me ask you one more question. If you had a magic wand and you could wave it and change the Jax however you might wish, what would you do?

JS: My answer would be so retrogressive.

SM: You'd turn it to the days of Prexy. Would you make it very small again? Because some people have said, you know, talked about size.

JS: This is a problem, nothing I say or wish is going to make any difference. Back in the early days we were little science, very much little science. Today the Jackson Laboratory is still little science in the sense of say, 5

billion for the SSC. So we are still little science, but not in the sense that we were in the old days. In the old days the strongest tool in the Laboratory was the scientist's mind, which I hope it still is. But other than that and a pencil and paper and animals, that was it. That was the work room. Today instrumentation is enormous. I remember when we got our first electron microscope. The price was something like $65,000 dollars.

SM: That's nothing today.

JS: That would support the whole staff for six months. And it was awesome. Today $100,000, $500,000 for an instrument is not unusual. So in that sense the Lab has come more to be, or come nearer to being big science. Big science among the life sciences. So that is something that you could not change. You can't regress in that department. I would change the administration. I think there are some of the most inept people I have ever met who are now in the Laboratory administration. And after you turn that off I'll name them.

End of Tape.

03/25/87

TMC