

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

Wendell Stucki – Life as Ricks
College Faculty

By Gen Smith

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Oral Interview conducted by Larry Ostler

Transcribed by Sarah McCorristin February 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

Larry Ostler: You came to college in 1938?

Wendell Stucki: Yes, in the summer of '38.

LO: Which departments did you teach in?

WS: Well, when I was hired President J. Ruben Clarke somehow got hold of my name and he interviewed me and he said, "Now Brother Stucki, we were hiring you to build a Department of Agriculture at Ricks College." When I got there and started to teach they gave me Botany, Bacteriology, Genetics, Zoology, and a religion class. I taught those classes for two or three years and just gradually got into agriculture.

LO: So you graduated from AC.

WS: From Brigham Young University. I had been at Utah State and got a degree in Animal Science, and then I went to Brigham Young University and got a degree in Agronomy under Dr. Tommy Martin. These were two Bachelor degrees.

LO: So you had two Bachelor degrees. In teaching your students did you use the library at all? Was it a place you used or did you just use your textbooks?

WS: Yes, we used the library a lot, lots of references in bacteriology and botany and those biological sciences were necessary. Then during those times President Manwaring was president of the school and he had us take turns in supervising the library in the evenings. In addition to the use of it in the daytime, we took turns as a faculty in going up to the library and spending from six to ten in the evening to just be there to see that things were calm and quiet.

LO: Who was the librarian? Edith Rich?

WS: Edith Rich, yes.

LO: Did she come before you?

WS: Yes, she was there ahead of me. I was raised in the same ward with Edith Rich and knew her very well. I was well acquainted with her when I got there to school and found her to be the librarian.

LO: Oh, that was interesting. So as a faculty member, you had to take your turn supervising at the library?

WS: Yes, I remember a few times of going up in the evening to study and I volunteered to take President Manwaring's place. As the president of the school he had to take his turn too. He was a great man. I have a feeling that Ricks College wouldn't be here if it hadn't of been for President Manwaring.

LO: Yes, I heard that.

WS: He was the man that really worked to save Ricks College from going over to the state or dissolve or be dismissed as a school.

LO: Everyone I have talked to have said he was a great administrator.

WS: He would be there at six o'clock in the morning and then he would take his turn with things like the library along with the faculty. There were just thirteen members in the faculty as I remember it. I was the fourteenth. We had faculty meeting every week and distributed the responsibilities. We used to all go to the dances and everyone took part.

LO: Yes, I'm sure you had to do that.

WS: We had to solicit money. This is a little bit beside the point, but they put me on the athletic committee and I had to go and make collections for money to run the football team. We just had \$800 for football. I said to President Manwaring about the middle of the winter, "President, you know if I had to be the President of Ricks College and run after money like we do for these athletics, I would do away with football." He said, "If we ever do away with football it would be over my dead body."

LO: He really believed in that?

WS: Oh, yes. He loved athletics and loved the whole program and said we had to build it, that we couldn't run away from it.

LO: That's interesting. I didn't realize he was that committed to it.

WS: Oh, yes, he was committed to the school and all its parts. He was respectful to the faculty. I was young and inexperienced, but he would call me professor and handle me so formally. I was really amazed that he would.

LO: He never treated you like a kid?

WS: Oh, no.

LO: That's interesting. From your view as a new faculty member how do you think the other faculty members felt about the library and its value to the school? Was it used generally? Was it only a study hall? Were there books of any value there?

WS: Oh, yes, they had all reference books and I remember going and especially studying B.H. Roberts' History of the Church. We had periodicals and they were happy to subscribe to various periodicals that I needed. I had real cooperation. Of course, Edith Rich was a friend of mine before I went there- we were ever raised on the same block and

she was in our home about as much as any other girl other than my own sisters- I knew Edith about as well as my sisters to I could go to Edith and she would always help me.

LO: So the library really did suit your needs?

WS: Oh, yes, I like the library. I got about as much good out of it then as later on when it had so many other recourses to offer. It was really a small library; lots of schools, high school, maybe had better libraries. It was surely good for me.

LO: It served your needs pretty well?

WS: Really well.

LO: How do you think the other faculty felt about it. Did you have any discussions or what was your perception about that?

WS: Well, I heard a little criticism occasionally from the students- probably got it from their parents. I knew the students well that put the cow in the library the time in the winter. I'm not sure if it was the first winter I was there or a year or so later, but I knew the students really well that did that.

LO: You knew the ones that pulled that prank?

WS: Yes, they put some chickens along with the cow up in the library and it was quite a mess. They had them clean it out. Of course the janitor had the bulk of it. I was there when that went on. Of course those kids didn't do that to criticize the library. They did it just as a prank.

LO: It is really kind of funny. Do you recall if the library had a budget? Do you know if Edith had any money?

WS: Oh, yes, there was a little money, but you know there was so little money. My salary the first year was \$1,200. The salaries were so low the budget must have been low. I don't recall now, although I'm sure I knew at the time what the library budget was and how much each department had to spend.

LO: It wasn't much?

WS: No, it surely wasn't much. It was as much, but it was as much as they spent for other things. It was a proportional budget.

LO: Was the security of the school pretty much established by the time you got there? Had they pretty well passed through their worst times by 1938? Had the church pretty well said we are going to keep the school?

WS: I felt secure about it. In fact, the next year I was offered a position at the Brigham Young University and I could have gone down there the second year I was here. I didn't take it even though they offered me a little more money; it wasn't enough to be of any great inducement. It was considerable more but not enough to be of any great inducement. It was considerable more but not enough to pay to move and meet extra expenses. I figured that the salary wasn't anything very special. Dr. West learned that I was considering going to BYU and he discouraged me and called Dr. Martin down there and told that he didn't appreciate him taking the faculty away from Ricks College.

LO: They were all looking for faculty?

WS: Yes, and so I had the feeling of security as far as the church was concerned. I didn't feel there was any more trouble, although the President Manwaring occasionally would mention that we needed to grow and we needed to assure the brethren that we were doing a good job and assume that if we did a good job everything would be alright. It was still in the memory of everyone of how things had been.

LO: I interviewed Dr. Morrell yesterday, and you know he came earlier and he was in there during that whole terrible period when the school was on the edge.

WS: He was one of the ribs of the skeleton when I got here.

LO: Yes, that is what he said. He said they had some terrifically hard times during the thirties. What about the size of the collection of books? I guess it wasn't a large room particularly. There wasn't a lot of room for books.

WS: Well, it was the top floor. It was the top floor between the doors from the stairs, and so it seemed to me reasonable adequate for our needs. For the number of student we had I felt good about the library. My own attitude toward it. It may have been Edith Rich that gave me more security about it. She was so cooperative and she knew what she was doing. She knew what a library ought to be and she was really cooperative in getting periodicals and other things we needed.

LO: So the relationship between the two of you probably helped?

WS: Yes, so I had no criticism of the library.

LO: I understand she was the first trained librarian they had. They just had someone in there before.

WS: Yes, I was so busy teaching these classes. You know for the size of the school my classes were large. I had sixty to eighty students in just about every class I taught.

LO: How large of student body did you have?

WS: Oh, goodness, I don't know if I would be very accurate in quoting you the student body by memory. I would guess there were three hundred students. But I had big classes. It seemed I had big classes all the time. I never did have a class for some years that was small. We got kind of specialized and had a few agriculture classes that were maybe ten or eleven students in it, but at first I had big classes. We hardly had room on the classrooms for the students I had. Dr. Blaine Passey was my laboratory assistant in bacteriology when I was first here. He was saying then that he wanted to be a doctor. I had known Blain's parents since he was from our same home town. I knew he was a good student so I got him to be my assistant. Then President Manwaring saw me with this load with so many students so he got me a secretary. I had a secretary to assist me with the papers and the work in my office and also Blaine Passey to assist in the laboratory. That helped quite a lot. President Manwaring gave me that help.

LO: He must have been quite an administrator.

WS: Oh, he was. He knew what was going on. He was there in the school and knew when the teachers came in the morning and knew when the teachers came to school in the morning and he knew if they were late and he knew if they stayed during the day and if they were devoted to the school.

LO: He kept track of them?

WS: Yes, he knew it. We had one man teaching German and a few other classes like that, and he let him go at the end of the first year. The reason that he told me that he let him go is because I found him down in the drugstore often in the middle of the day.

LO: He wasn't attending school?

WS: He didn't have laboratory classes you know. He was teaching German and they were trying to drum up enough classes to keep him busy, but still he didn't have quite enough assignments so they let him go. The President asked me to teach German. I taught first year German then after he left along with these other classes for three or four years. They didn't take a class away from me- they just gave me another one. So I taught first year German for a few years, and then I could see Albert Pieper going to waste. He was in the bookkeeping department. By this time President Clarke had come and I said to President Clarke that I wasn't a very specialized person in German. I had been there on a mission and could read German and I could speak it but I wasn't very strong as a German Professor. So I asked him if Albert Pieper could do it since he was a native German. He had spoken it in their home and he grew up as a German and had been to Germany on a mission too. So I got Albert into the language business.

LO: That's how he happened to get in it?

WS: Yes, I went to President Clarke and told him that Albert was the man we needed in there as I had so much of the other work to do. I was looking for a little relief.

LO: You were as busy as you could be? I understand you had big summer schools at one time?

WS: Yes, I think it was seven years that I was here I spent my summers by the hour at a pretty low wage because the depression was on. I went out and visited students. I visited students all across Southeast Idaho.

LO: They were working on farms getting credit?

WS: No, we were visiting them urging them to come to Ricks.

LO: Oh, recruiting.

WS: Yes, recruiting. That is what I was doing. I did that for seven summers and they paid me a little extra for that. They bought my gas so I earned a little bit of money that way in the summers. I went all the way from Twin Falls to Teton Basin. I visited all the high schools and the bishops and stake presidents.

LO: You tried to interest them that way?

WS: Even families whose names I would get as I went around that would be interested, I visited the families.

LO: To see if their boys or girls wanted to come to Ricks College?

WS: Yes, I visited both boys and girls and parents as I went around and bishops, stake presidents, school superintendents trying to drum up the business.

LO: So you were a summer recruiter?

WS: Yes, for seven summers I did that. I taught summer school class also. I think I taught twenty-nine summers, not a lot of classes, but I taught maybe two or three classes during the summer term and then in between I did this recruiting. I didn't do the recruiting while I was teaching the summer school class. President Manwaring didn't hesitate in assigning you subjects that you weren't very well acquainted with. He asked me when World War II started to come and teach chemistry. I said "President, I'm not a Chemist. I have taken a few classes in chemistry." He said, "Oh, I've already looked at your transcript and you got A's; you can do it."

LO: And did you?

WS: Yes, I taught chemistry one year-first year chemistry. Artell Chapman was pulled into the service and went to some school to do some teaching in connection with GI's, you know, that type of work. I have forgotten whether he was in Oregon or at the University of Idaho, somewhere up there.

LO: The military pulled him into that?

WS: Yes, so I taught first year chemistry. Just the other day I ran into a girl that was in that class and she said that I had saved her neck. The only reason I saved her neck is because I couldn't talk over their heads.

LO: They understood what you had to say?

WS: I wasn't chemist enough to talk over their heads, so they could understand me.

LO: That's interesting. Well, President, I think that is going to help. I appreciate you taking the time.

WS: That's not very much about the library but that's about all I know.

LO: I'm really just looking for what you have told me.