James Meiman Interview
Robert Zimdahl, Interviewer
March 25, 2011

INTERVIEWER: I like Pam, but she likes low chairs, because she's short.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: I was walking across campus one day, from the library to the student center--

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: And I met George Splittgerber

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Ron's father.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I know George.

INTERVIEWER: And he came here in 1943. And I said, George, has anybody ever asked you to
tell your stories? You know, nobody had. And I thought, that's a shame. Because we're all gonna
die.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: And sort of the history of the place is lost. So, through-- with the Society of
Senior Scholars, we decided, we're going to capture those stories. And George is next.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: OK. [LAUGHTER].

INTERVIEWER: And my only rule has been-- or my only criterion has been-- somebody has to
have been retired at least five years. Maybe more. And the one criticism I've had is, you haven't
interviewed many women.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm.

INTERVIEWER: And there's a really good reason for that. And that's because not many of them
came back in their '50s and '60s. There just weren't a lot of women hired.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Are you going to monitor him?

LOUISE (OFFSCREEN): Oh, no, I was just-- can I listen?
INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

LOUISE (OFFSCREEN): Did you start already, or--

JAMES R. MEIMAN: No.

LOUISE (OFFSCREEN): Oh. OK. I just wondered, do I need to be quiet? Not in the kitchen?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. Probably.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you're welcome to listen. You just can't answer his questions. Is that thing on, Dan?

DAN: Let me make sure. We're recording.

INTERVIEWER: Video audiographer, and he's writing a few stories about some of the interviews that are going to be published in the alumni news. The first question is, give us your full name and date of birth.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: OK. It's James R. Meiman, and it's 12/10/33.

INTERVIEWER: '33. Where were you born?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I was born in Louisville, Kentucky.

INTERVIEWER: And you grew up there?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I did.

INTERVIEWER: You went through all-- grade school, high school, in Louisville. What were your parents' names, and their occupations?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: OK, my mother's name was Thelma, and she was a-- something rare in those days-- a working mom. She worked in an office, I think, a bookkeeper kind of position we call it today. And then my dad-- his name, Alphonse Paul-- and he was various things, but the last job he held, he was manager of a package liquor store.

INTERVIEWER: Hm. Do you have siblings?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I have one sister.

INTERVIEWER: And, she's older, or younger?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: She's older than I am.

INTERVIEWER: Older. And where does she live?
JAMES R. MEIMAN: She lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. So when you were growing up, what were your hobbies, or your pastimes? Other than school, how did you spend your time?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, from very earliest days, I was always very much interested in the out-of-doors. And, I think in high school, it probably was, that I really got interested in our National Forests, and our parks.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: There was a little local county park close by that I liked to go to, so I got interested in outdoors and natural resources,

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any particular role model, other than your family-- your father and mother-- that you looked up to in your community?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: There were some. One of the influences on my interest in natural resources was a fellow named Tom Wallace, who was, I believe, then an editor of the Louisville Courier Journal, whose paper had wrote columns about all kinds of things, including out west, and what was happening out here, and some of the dams, and the constructions, so--

INTERVIEWER: Were there people outside your community that influenced you?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Very much, yeah. Through writings.

INTERVIEWER: Who?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Probably the chief one was a guy named Hugh Hammond Bennett. Hugh Hammond Bennett was the father of soil conservation in this country. And he wrote a thick book-- I think I've since given it to my son, who's now on the faculty here also, called Soil Conservation. And I think I read that in high school, probably, and he got me really fired up and interested.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have particular mentors in high school?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I had some. One or two. I went to a Catholic high school that had brothers, Xaverian brothers, that taught there, and I had one who taught biology, and he knew that I was interested in this kind of thing, so he would give me special little projects and things to work on, so he was one. And there were others, you know, similar kind of things.

INTERVIEWER: When you look back on those times, were there some special experiences that created who you are?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, gosh. That's a good question. That's a tough question. I'm sure there were. But to try to identify specifically which ones, and how, that's a little tougher.
INTERVIEWER: You could say no.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. Well, I'm sure there were ones along the way. Lots of different kinds of experiences.

INTERVIEWER: So your elementary and high school education were in Louisville.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: And any comments on it?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: No. Pretty typical, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Nothing unusual.

INTERVIEWER: You were a good student?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah, I think I was a fairly good student.

INTERVIEWER: When you finished high school, did your mother and father favor your going on to college?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: They very much did. I didn't want to have any part of it.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: And probably did it as much for them as anything else. I really wasn't interested in going to college.

INTERVIEWER: What were you interested in?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I was interested in doing something productive, outdoors, preferably. Working.

INTERVIEWER: So your high school experience did or did not influence your career?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, I think it certainly did, in the long run.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hm.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: But at the time that-- you were asking about the time deciding to go to college-- I really wasn't that interested in going to college.

INTERVIEWER: So they said, you're going.
JAMES R. MEIMAN: Not quite that abrupt. But almost. [LAUGHTER].

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned Hammond's book. Were there other books that you read during your high school experience? Were you a reader?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I read a fair amount. You know, I wasn't an obsessive reader, but yeah, I used to read, and then-- one of the things that impacted me, I'm sure, were the journals, or the magazines, like Outdoor Life, and some of the outdoors-y type magazines.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have jobs when you were in high school?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I did, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, when I was very young in high school, starting, I worked with a photographer. That was a good job. He did a lot of athletic movies in those days, and I was sort of his assistant. Later on in high school, I worked at a Kroger store, a grocery store. I rose to the ninth produce manager at a Kroger's grocery store.

INTERVIEWER: Did you participate in athletics in high school?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I did a little bit, but I wasn't really good at it. I played freshman basketball, I think it was, and then I didn't go further.

INTERVIEWER: When were you and Louise married?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: When were we married? [CHUCKLES].

INTERVIEWER: You're supposed to know that.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Uh-oh. Now you're going to try to get me in trouble. We got married here, in '65-- '66? Right in there somewhere. [LAUGHS]. 1966. And the interesting part of that, Bob, is, we met in the faculty apartments. I was a single guy living on the third floor, and Louise moved in, to the second floor. The old yellow brick buildings over on Laurel Street.

INTERVIEWER: So '66-- that's, what, 45 years you've been married.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I think it figures out something like that.

INTERVIEWER: And tell us about your children.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I have three children. Lisa, our oldest, is a music therapist. Andrew, our second, is a-- well, he was an aeronautical space engineer. He's now working in green energy. Designing buildings, and so on. Working with redesign of buildings for energy conservation. And then Paul, our youngest, is here at CSU, on the Range faculty.
INTERVIEWER: You have grandchildren?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: We do.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You remember them?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, yeah, I remember them, very well. My daughter Lisa has three, and my son Andrew has two, and Paul and his wife just recently adopted a new baby.

INTERVIEWER: So Paul's here in town. Where are the other two?


INTERVIEWER: Did you have military service?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I did, yes.

INTERVIEWER: When and where?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, I was in-- stayed in this country. I was in from 1955 to 1957, in active duty, and then I served in the reserve for several years after that.

INTERVIEWER: Army?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: In the Army Signal Corps, yes.

INTERVIEWER: That was a good thing?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: It was a good experience. I taught, so it was my introduction to teaching. It was one of the few times I ever had, actually, instruction in teaching. Because you don't usually get that in university system.

INTERVIEWER: But you were reluctant to go to college. Where did you go?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I went to University of Kentucky.

INTERVIEWER: That's also in Louisville?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: No, that's in Lexington.

INTERVIEWER: In Lexington.
JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you pick your major?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: It was easy. Agriculture. That was the-- I wanted to study forestry, as it was my goal, but Kentucky didn't have a forestry degree. They had a few courses. And I couldn't afford-- the next closest was Purdue, and I couldn't afford to go to Purdue because it was out of state. So I went to Kentucky, and got as close to forestry and soil conservation as I could.

INTERVIEWER: Did you participate in extracurricular activities?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Somewhat. Although I had limited time. I worked. I finished a BS degree in three and 1/2 years. And that pretty much--

INTERVIEWER: Where did you work? Where did you work?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, for a while I worked at a nursery, and then I work at a seed store. So it was all kind of related to career--

INTERVIEWER: You must have been a good student, if you finished in three and 1/2 years.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I was pretty fair, I think, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Pretty fair.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. [CHUCKLES]

INTERVIEWER: During your undergraduate years, three and 1/2 years, did that lead to your graduate experience?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Again, I didn't really plan to go on to graduate school. But I had a professor who was-- we all have at least one of these, I think-- he was a professor of soils, Bill [? Schwandt, ?] and Bill said, you should go to graduate school, and really pushed me, and so I did. I went into the military, came back and got a master's with him--

INTERVIEWER: At Kentucky.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: At Kentucky. And then, one day while I was doing that-- I had a habit of going to the extension station, and into their library, and just reading. Just, whatever I could find. And I was reading that there was a new program starting at Colorado State University, in Watershed Management. And I said, that's for me, that's-- I had worked for the Soil Conservation Service in between other things-- and so that kind of flagged the program here.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember your master's thesis title?
JAMES R. MEIMAN: You know, it's something like The Effect of Course of-- Cultivation on Bedford Silt Loam Soil.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hm. And so you finished the master's at Kentucky, and then you--

JAMES R. MEIMAN: No, the-- yes, the master's from Kentucky--

INTERVIEWER: University of Kentucky.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And then you immediately came to CSU?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, I-- not immediately. I worked a while for the Soil Conservation Service.

INTERVIEWER: How long?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, it's a long story. I started with the Soil Conservation Service as a senior in college, under what was then a student training program. Great program.

INTERVIEWER: You got paid.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Got paid, got introduced, had a job. After I graduated with a bachelor's degree, I went to work for the Soil Conservation Service for about a six or eight month period, then I went into the military service. When I came out of the military, I went back to work for the Soil Conservation Service. So it was on and off.

INTERVIEWER: So your master's program was how long?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: A year.

INTERVIEWER: A year?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: And then you came to CSU?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Then I went back to work for the Soil Conservation Service. And then, after another six or eight months with them-- six months, I think it was-- I came out here.

INTERVIEWER: And you picked it because of an advertisement that you saw in the extension office.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I picked it because of an article I read on the new program starting at Colorado State under Dr. Bob Dils, and I just thought, that's it.
INTERVIEWER: Do you have any comments on your graduate experience?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Here.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yes. It was a very good graduate experience.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And how long did your dissertation take, and what was the title?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: It took, let's see, all told, I came in '59-- fall of '59-- I finished in January of '62. I didn't finish in January of '62, I'd started on the faculty in January of '62, before I finished.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: And then finished up in '62.

INTERVIEWER: In what department?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: It was in the-- it wasn't a department per se-- it was called the Cooperative Watershed Management Unit. It was a unit in the College of what was then Forestry and Natural Resources.

INTERVIEWER: So you really didn't have an interview when you were hired on the faculty.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I had a two-year interview as a student. [LAUGHS]. Yeah. But no, I mean, I was hired right out the student directory. Graduate student ranks, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What impressed you, or didn't impress you, about CSU when you arrived?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, gosh. Almost everything impressed me about CSU. The setting. Beautiful setting. The mountains-- I'd always dreamed of being in the mountains-- there I was. The people. They had a fantastic a major professor, Bob Dils, and his wife, Nedra. I just gave a talk a couple years ago, on the 50th anniversary of the watershed program, and I pointed out that it was like coming into another family. It was so welcoming and supportive a place.

INTERVIEWER: Who were your other colleagues, if you remember?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, I-- there's none, none here now. You mean--

INTERVIEWER: No, but then, when you--

JAMES R. MEIMAN: As a student? Oh, yes--

INTERVIEWER: Or a student when you started on the faculty.
JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yes. Gosh, there's a lot of them. One did come back here; was on the faculty, Roger Hoffer. He was in Forestry, and Remote Sensing. Peter Black went to Syracuse. He's a fairly well-known textbook producer, and Public Information Specialist, so-- in watershed, so I could name a dozen of them.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me the ones who had the greatest influence on you.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, it was interesting, Bob. The way the program worked, and I learned it later as a model, as graduate dean of the university here, is that we very much learned from each other, and supported each other. And one of the keys to that is, we were housed together. So having that common housing, and having that feeling of comradeship-- excuse me, comradeship, and supporting each other-- we learned a tremendous amount from each other that way.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you housed?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Different places. When we started we were in the old Forestry Building--

INTERVIEWER: Which is?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Which is the yellow brick building that's-- well, it's just east of where the new Natural Resources building is in there. And the other neat thing about it was, the Forest Service research station was housed in that same building-- part of it was. We have this long relationship with the Forest Service, and that helped with the education, because you've got all of these research people there you could go talk to about things.

INTERVIEWER: How many years did you work at CSU?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: 30.

INTERVIEWER: 30 years. And what positions and titles did you hold during that time?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Graduate student. Instructor. The usual. Assistant professor. Associate professor. Professor. Graduate dean. Associate Vice-president for Research. And Director of International Programs.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hm.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: So it was quite a ride. Good ride.

INTERVIEWER: What were your early professional goals?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, my goals were pretty much university-centered. When I had an opportunity to stay here, beyond the faculty, that's-- really set my goals. I was interested, of course, in research, and I was particularly interested in field research-type problems. And I was
interested in students, and working with students. And so those became my professional direction.

INTERVIEWER: What was your research area?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: My research area was in snow hydrology. Principally. I worked in some other things. In water quality, and soil conservation, because of my background in soil conservation. But, if I had to pick one area that I focused in, it was in snow hydrology.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hm. So your early goals were, keep a job.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Keep a job.

INTERVIEWER: And work in snow hydrology. Did you accomplish your--

JAMES R. MEIMAN: And teach.

INTERVIEWER: And teach. Did you accomplish those goals?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I did. In the sense that I did those things. How well is, you know, that's open to review, but yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So, 30 years. Did your career make a difference?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: You'd have to ask other people, because in a university, the real difference is does it make a difference in students. In their lives.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it did?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I feel good about what was done.

INTERVIEWER: Did your early goals differ from your later goals?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, it was kind of an evolution. I always kept a hand in research, even though, about midway through my career, I switched into more administrative responsibilities. The first one was being the graduate school dean. And later associate vice president for research. And then all of-- ever since beginning the graduate school, I inherited the international programs. I was-- Wendell Bragonier who was before me-- had the foreign student adviser, which is about all international programs amounted to, staff-wise, was a foreign student advisor--

INTERVIEWER: Jim Graham.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Jim Graham, yeah, and a secretary. Jean Griswold was there as a volunteer. You picked her up later, as part of our group on staff, and that was international programs. And of course we had some faculty that were active-- lots of faculty that were active
in different programs. Area studies programs, and had gone overseas, had various kinds of international experience.

INTERVIEWER: You had your research goal in snow hydrology, and certain people you worked with were strong influences on you. Did you have a similar group when you went into administration?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah, I think there were some people that, that I particularly tried to emulate, and--

INTERVIEWER: Who?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, the first one who stands out is the one who pointed me to the graduate school. It was Chuck Neidt. Chuck was, I think, a really solid administrator, and worked well with faculty and students, and seemed to be a fit in the university community.

The other person that's quite different from Chuck Neidt, that I really admired, was, was George Olson. I don't know if you remember George. But George was-- the reason I liked him so well, George was a can-do guy. He didn't stand around and think up reasons why he couldn't do something. He went out and did it. And he offered a lot to the university.

And then, on a grander scale, I always admired Bill Morgan.

INTERVIEWER: But Bill was president when you came.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: He was president when I came. And for a long time.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Any comments on others who were president during your tenure?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Each president has their own character, of course, and their own influence.

INTERVIEWER: You don't have to say nice things.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I'm not going to say anything bad, because [LAUGHTER] there's too many good things that came out of working with a lot of different people. I guess the one that, honestly, that I enjoyed working with the most, was Phil Austin. Phil was-- he's just a great guy.

INTERVIEWER: You were in the graduate school then?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Let's see. Was I in the graduate-- no. Ray Chamberlain was president, I think, when I was in the graduate school. Phil came along later.

INTERVIEWER: Now most of us who think we do research take some pride in what we've accomplished. Books. Book chapters. Publications. What did you contribute in that way?
JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. Don't have a book. I started a book once, but it was-- I started it when I was-- or at least part of a book-- when I was dean of the graduate school, and that was a mistake. There wasn't time to do that. I should have done it earlier. When I look back over publications and research, I have the usual array of journal articles, you know, that we all have, but what I had a lot of were presentations and proceedings. Special conferences. I guess the jargon now would be sort of, like, in technology transfer.

And I worked very closely with one organization called the Western Snow Conference, which I really enjoyed, which was an amalgamation of people working in the field. The people that do our snow surveys up here in the mountains, still. Every day. Engineers. Biologists. Foresters. All kinds of different people that were interested in snow. And so I've published in there, and then I became president, or chair, I guess that we called it in those days, of that group. So that was one of the accomplishments that I felt recognition from peers.

INTERVIEWER: So that was what you'd call a professional activity outside CSU?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were there others? That you were involved in?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yes. I was an editor, or associate editor, for a while, for the American Geophysical Union Journal, called Water Resources Research, so that was-- I was proud of that. That was an accomplishment.

INTERVIEWER: Now if you walk down the street in Fort Collins, and you said to the average person, I worked at CSU, and I worked on snow--

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: They'd probably say why? What would you tell them? Why snow?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, I'm a hydrologist, basically, so a hydrologist works on the hydrologic cycle. And if you're in Colorado, and you're right here by the mountains, and the mountains are full of snow, and that snow provides us with our drinking water, and our irrigation water. In fact, that snow, the water it produces, is, you could say, largely the reason why we're here. Why Fort Collins is here, and the whole Front Range is here. And so, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to say, hey, we ought to be learning more about, about snow, and the water that comes from it.

INTERVIEWER: When you first arrived, what sort of facilities were you provided?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Facilities were a problem in those days. We weren't-- CSU has never been, as you know, a rich university. It's not. You have to struggle for what you get. And we had--
For me, it wasn't so terribly important, as I started working in snow. Because we had a tremendous facility up here, called "The Mountains," and we had a facility that I helped build a little bit more. Research capability, into what we call Pingree Park. And so--

INTERVIEWER: Well, you helped build that?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I didn't help build Pingree Park. I helped build a research lab up there, which is still there today, although I think it's used more, more as a classroom.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Was teaching your primary role, when you came?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: It was, from the start, a mix of teaching and research. Teaching was stronger at first, because it was a new program and we had to build courses. And I worked very closely with Bob Dils to build a curriculum, and courses.

INTERVIEWER: What courses did you teach?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, we started-- the ones that I taught-- of course there were several in snow, snow-related courses, snow hydrology. I taught a course in Application Watershed Management, which fit my background and interest. Where we, in effect, were teaching guys and subsequently ladies, to hit the field running. Knowing how to operate in the field, and how to do things. How to put in soil conservation practices. How to put in rock check dams. How to manage forests, so we could get the optimum out of the water.

So that was probably the highlight. The snow hydrology was first, because that was my specialty. But then, the applications course--

INTERVIEWER: Snow hydrology was a course? And is a course?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: It is. It was, is-- actually, it was several courses. I think we ended up with about three courses at that time, and I don't know-- what, they have several now.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Did you have particular goals, objectives, for your teaching?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, yes. The Army course I had in-- way back when, when I was in the service, they had this one motto-- "If the student fails to learn, the teacher failed to teach." So, that becomes a goal. That students can learn, and that-- actually, beyond that, even, you can learn together. I think that's--

INTERVIEWER: What did you learn from them?
JAMES R. MEIMAN: You learn from them, as you know, through the kinds of questions that they ask. The kinds of insights they bring into a problem. But also, from-- in those days, from their own background. A lot of practical things. We would get, you know, some farm kids, and people that had been in the mountains, and so some very practical kinds of experience.

INTERVIEWER: You were a graduate student advisor. And how many students did you advise during your time?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I think during the period I was active in the department, I probably had, maybe 10, or 11 grad-- Ph.D. students. Probably 25 or 30 Master's. And I think the thing that I was always proud of-- I think I, one time, counted up, and I served on over 100 graduate committees. And not just in the college or the department, but across campus, in biology, and engineering, and other fields. And that was a tremendous education alone. Just that experience.

INTERVIEWER: When you started teaching, you had certain methods that you used.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: Did those evolve? Did they change with time? And how?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I'd say they changed with time. Although, fundamentally-- again, I go back to training in the military. You tell students what you're going to teach them, and you teach them, and you tell them what you told them. What you taught them? That's the old Army rubric. But more than that, my major professor back at Kentucky had this style of teaching where, each day you would come in and write on the black-- on the chalkboard, with chalk, two or three major objectives for that day. The learning objectives for that day. Which was kind of a reinforcement of the old Army methodology. But he said, this is what we're going to do today, then he'd do it, and then when he was done, he would summarize it. So--

INTERVIEWER: Do you do that?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I tried to do that. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you succeed?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: You'd have to ask the students. [LAUGHTER].

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you succeeded?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I enjoyed teaching. And I don't think you would enjoy teaching unless you thought, you know, something was happening there, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah.
INTERVIEWER: When you first began, you described the facilities as, not primitive, but limited.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: What about funding?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Funding was in the same sense. You had to go out and root for your funding, and everything, I mean, my whole memory of CSU will always be one of, kind of, lifting yourself up by your bootstraps. It was always-- you had to fight for, for funds, for facilities, for office space, for whatever it was. It's always been pretty competitive. And I think it was managed that way, in the early days, especially. I think that was-- you know, you were asking about presidents. I think that was Ray Chamberlain's forte. He really encouraged that kind of competition.

INTERVIEWER: My next question is one I almost feel bad to ask. Because many people have not had extensive international experience.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: You have. Tell us about it.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, it goes all the way back to high school again, Bob. When I was in high school, I can remember trying to read and learn more about international. When I was in college, I remember writing a letter to the Department of Agriculture, saying, how can I get a job working in international work?

Those days, there wasn't a Peace Corps. There wasn't much of a training program, at least in Agriculture.

INTERVIEWER: Did they answer your letter?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I did get a letter back, and if I can remember correctly, it said something like, well, you have to get really good in your own field, and then there'll be opportunities later. In other words, there wasn't much you could do then, which was-- when I saw the Peace Corps come along, I just thought, man, isn't that a great idea? And isn't that a great program for young people to be able to get that initial experience.

INTERVIEWER: You were too old then.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. Well, when the Peace Corps came-- I guess you're never too old for the Peace Corps, but I was all caught up in trying to get a Ph.D., and going to school.

INTERVIEWER: Say more about your international experience.
JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, I was delighted when I got the graduate dean job that the international was part of it. I'd at least gotten the connection. But I'd always been interested in overseas work, and Bob Dils, who, who started the watershed unit, believed very strongly in international work. And he personally was on a mission. He went out, and traveled around the world. And recruited students. Made alliances for research. And we had a very healthy contingent of international students, always, in the watershed program. In fact, for a while, I'm not sure it's still true, we were known as the international watershed center. Right here at CSU.

INTERVIEWER: You must have gone someplace outside the US. Where did you go?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, over the course of the subsequent years, I've been to 24 different developing countries. And a few development countries. One of the early longer-term, which was about six, seven months, was in Switzerland. I went to Switzerland and studied there with the Swiss Forest Research Institute. Which was a really good opportunity.

In the earlier-- I'm trying to think of some of the earliest consulting or development-type work-- and it was probably with Latin America. We helped get started, down in Turrialba, Costa Rica, a school of watershed management. So I was down there. I went over with the Peace Corps-- not as a Peace Corps volunteer, but as a Peace Corps supporter-- to Peru, and worked with some of the forestry and natural resource volunteers. And then, from then on, it just became opportunities to go, usually for short-term lectureships, Venezuela, and gradually into Asia--

INTERVIEWER: Who funded all that?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: How did you pay for all that?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh gosh, it was funded by different organizations. Or sometimes we were on exchange programs, so we could do them on the cheap, you know, without costing a lot of money.

INTERVIEWER: External funding.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. External funding. Pretty much external funding, yeah. Yeah. Not-- we-- and as you know, we didn't have, never did have, a lot of money here for international. It's always been a fight to--

INTERVIEWER: But you think it's important.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Of course, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Why is it important to faculty and to students that they have international experience?
JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh gosh, I mean, this is the world we live in. So we better understand how this world works. We better find out the kinds of things that are going to impact us from that kind of international exchange and experience. And more so than ever for our students to get that, how are we going to get our students-- of course, there's lots of ways we can get our students that. But part of it is through the on-campus kind of instruction we have.

INTERVIEWER: Jim, what were the biggest challenges of your first years at CSU?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, I guess the biggest challenges, when first starting as a faculty member, were to get, get funding for your research. I mean, this was the big challenge, if you were going to-- you had to do research, and you had to go get your own money, so that was a really big challenge. I think teaching in a university setting, initially, is a challenge, and probably you could argue always is a challenge, because things are changing. But I would say it probably related to the funding. We were building a research program.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you get most of your funding?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: We got a really good boost from the Bureau of Reclamation. And this is kind of the-- outside the normal. The Bureau of Reclamations' engineering operation, and they fund engineering, but there was a fellow there-- and I think, again, it was probably Bob Dils that met him first-- who was head of their whole irrigation operation scheme, but who was interested in where does water come from, and what's the role of watersheds, and yielding water. And so we got funding from the Bureau.

There was a colleague, Bert Goodell, who was a retired Forest Service-- well, he wasn't retired yet-- he was an active Forest Service researcher. We worked at the Fraser Experimental Forest. And had lots of experience in research. He was a northeasterner, a Yankee, a really down-to-earth practical guy. But a tremendous researcher. So he and I together-- I was fortunate to be able to pair up with him-- and we got this money from the Bureau of Reclamation to get going.

INTERVIEWER: So, challenges-- what were the greatest rewards?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Oh, gosh. I think it has to go back to students. I used to go-- I mentioned the Western Snow Conference-- I used to go annually to their meetings, and I would see former students making presentations, reporting on work. Or anywhere. American Geophysical Union meetings. And see students that you felt like you had maybe some influence on. Although most love it. They did themselves. But--

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you know now that you'd wished you'd known when you began?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, I'm sure there are. What are they? [LAUGHS]. I guess it started with the student thing. I wished I'd-- I always thought I took a real interest in students. I wished I would have taken even more. I wished I would have gotten to know them better, as students, and worked with them more closely. But you always-- you rationalize that it's in a university. You've
got so many things tugging away at you. Do as good a job as you could, but that would be one, I think, more, if at all possible, although my wife wouldn't agree. [LAUGHS].

I would have liked to have done more international work than I did, although I did enough that I was noticeably gone from the family, so there's that trade-off you make.

INTERVIEWER: Now Paul is a relatively new faculty member.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What do you tell him about the challenges he faces, and how his professorial role has changed, from when you began?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, I try not to tell him too much. [LAUGHTER]. I think you-- some things you just have to learn yourself--

INTERVIEWER: And you may not want to hear it.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: And you may not want to hear. But I try to stick to, pretty much, fundamentals, and philosophy of education, and not try to tell him a lot of "how to do things."

INTERVIEWER: But what would you tell him if you just, with abandon, just said, OK, Paul, here's the way it was?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah. We have had talks like that, and I've told him some of the problems that you encounter in a university setting, you know, everybody's off on their own tangent, everybody's very self-important. But that you've got to look at the bigger picture. That, at least the major part of being at a university is students. And try to work with them. And I really don't have to tell him much of that. He picked that up himself, and he's very student-oriented.

I was really proud; he just won the Outstanding Young Professor and Range Scientist for the country this past year, so we talk about philosophy, somewhat, of education. I've given him a few little things, like I've always kept a little plaque on my desk, and it says, what is a university? It's a beautiful little statement. It's dated, because it was written by a land grant president way back in, I think, the '40s. But it starts out, a university is a spirit. It is a place. And then it goes on to describe libraries, and laboratories, and people, and then it kind of ends up saying that it's a place where men-- now we would say students, or people, or men and women--are led by reason rather than force. And it's a beautiful very concise little thing.

INTERVIEWER: But do you think the challenges he faces are different than those that you faced at the beginning?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yes and no. I think yes, in the sense that you have-- I see this continual demand on your time, your whole-- I've always said that university is a beautiful place to work, you can do anything you want to do, if you can find the time to do it. And if anything, that's probably gotten worse than it was when we were uninvolved.
I still see the struggle to find funding for research. That's ever present. So those things are similar. I guess the difference I see— if anything, you have even more opportunities now than we had to do things. With all the electronic gadgetry we have to assist in teaching— and not just teaching, but to pull information together— I mean, it just blows my mind. Taking these subjects, or any word, and go in there, and search on Google, and spend the rest of the week, it's just amazing the resources you have.

And I think that's a challenge— presents a challenge. How can you command those resources effectively, and still remember your primary goal?

INTERVIEWER: The down side is, you can't escape.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: You can't escape.

INTERVIEWER: Got that phone all the time.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah, I walk on campus and I keep thinking the co-eds are talking to me. But then I look twice, and they're not talking to me. They're talking on the phone.

[LAUGHTER].

LOUISE (OFFSCREEN): It's a deep disappointment. [MORE LAUGHTER]

INTERVIEWER: What's your view, your position, positive or negative, on the role of a university? In the community? In the nation?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, you know, it's interesting to see, again, how things have changed, and yet in some ways remain the same. I've read several different books, usually by university presidents, you know, about you go through the Clark Kerr age of multiversities, and, again, then you're-- I don't even know what the current jargon is for what the university is. It's everything to everybody, it seems like. And so, I think it's good the university has such a widespread role.

But I think there's a danger that we get spread so thin, we kind of forget where we are and what we're supposed to be doing. And I always go back— my answer to that is always pretty simple— it's supposed to be about students. We can build research labs. We do. We have government labs and everything. What university's about is doing that in a way that you're helping students. And I guess that's the number one criteria I'd always look at, and go back to.

INTERVIEWER: That's the first role of the university? Education?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: I think education, undoubtedly, is the first role of a university.

INTERVIEWER: And what are the others?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, we have all kinds of other roles today, you know, the classic ones have always been a service role, an extension role, reach out role. And of course the research role
is very legitimate. If we're going to be teaching the very best in science, and in all fields, to be involved in research and discovery, or in creative activity in the case of the arts and sciences.

INTERVIEWER: Has the emphasis changed, over time?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Maybe I'm an old curmudgeon or something, but I kind of feel like it has. I kind of feel like that we shifted the emphasis more toward the non-teaching things that we do. And if I go back to your question, you asked, well, what are some things you wished you'd done more of-- I told Dale Hein, who was one of the recent directors up at Pingree Park-- I said, I spent a lot of time up there, I did a lot of research. I wished I would've spent more time in the teaching program there. I did work in the teaching program, but I wasn't one of the regulars, or the full-time people teaching up there. I kind of came in and out. When I could schedule it between my research. So, yeah. I think teaching is number one.

INTERVIEWER: Number one. Were there any major events-- local, national, world-- that influenced you in your career?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: You ask some tough questions, Bob. [LAUGHTER]. That's a good question. I guess the events-- there's not one, I can't pick out one right now, and say yeah, that really did. But I think the-- my reading, and what was happening in the world is still happening. You know, problems of hunger, poverty, injustice-- those collectively have always played upon me, and I think have been part of the stimulus, too, to do international work. Because you really try to help, even though you learn, in time, that what you do is maybe pretty limited of help. But I think that idea is there.

INTERVIEWER: Of those who have influenced you, have they affected the institution?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, the institution is us, you know, it's the faculty, and students, of course, and the staff, the whole bunch, but has it influenced us? I would like to say it has. When I look at what's going on today, on campus, and some of the good things that are being done, in developmental assistance, I mean, we've got a program in business now, working with entrepreneurs in developing countries, we've got the laboratories that are cranking out new models of cook stoves and things. I think we've had a good basis for this kind of work, set long, long ago, and I think it's built. I really do.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah? What have been the most significant changes in the university? Over the last 35 years?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Well, of course, numbers, I guess, is one of the first things, in fact.

INTERVIEWER: And more students.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: And more students.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.
JAMES R. MEIMAN: And what were talking about earlier-- the kinds of demands on the university, I think, has increased. Significantly. Over time. So you've got those numbers, and the kinds of things that people expect from the university, are big changes. I'm out 20 years now, Bob, almost. I'm not sure I have a really good handle on what exactly is happening on the, you know, campus, other kinds of things. But from what I can see, it looks like those are the two big things, anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Have the changes at Fort Collins affected the university?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Have the changes here affected the university?

INTERVIEWER: Or vice versa?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Vice versa. Well, vice versa's kind of easy. I'd say for sure, the university's affected change in Fort Collins in many ways, including growth, technology, what kinds of arts and things we have. Has it worked the other way? I'm sure it's kind of self-fulfilling, or back and forth, mutually. Synthesis-- synthesis-- synergy, I guess, is the word I'm looking for. You know, synergetic. As the city's grown, I think it can provide more things for the students, and the college, and vice versa.

So yeah, I think there's a synergy that's going on.

INTERVIEWER: Now you go back to Paul a minute--

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What are the important issues that he's going to have to face at university over the next few decades that he's going to be there?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: There's a number of challenges there. I think one of them is going to be the new ways of reaching out to people to give education. I think that's a really big challenge that we've already started to face, but you've got-- well, for example, distance learning would be one example of that, but maybe specialty training is another example of what we might have to do.

INTERVIEWER: What is that?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Targeting special needs in education, and addressing those. Beyond the normal progression of degrees, and curriculum, and so on. I think there's a lot of work still to do.

INTERVIEWER: And the young guys have to do that, but you and I didn't.

JAMES R. MEIMAN: We did it some, sure. I mean, I'm sure you had conferences for lead scientists come in and work with different groups. I remember working with the Forest Service-- the specialized training for different kinds of groups of people, but I just think that's becoming, probably, greater demand. And then at the same time that's happening, you've got more education going on, and I think-- out there, by companies or corporations.
JAMES R. MEIMAN: --New solutions, and stuff that maybe opens up new challenges, new ways to work. My experience is very limited, because we worked mostly with government agencies, but now I think there's a change even in natural resources where their jobs and things are more maybe oriented to nonprofit organizations, and to corporate organizations. So I think there's-- you've got to be alert to those kinds of changes that are happening.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any final comments you'd like to offer?

JAMES R. MEIMAN: [LAUGHS] No, I avoid final comments.

[both laughing]

INTERVIEWER: It's too final.

[both laughing]

JAMES R. MEIMAN: Yeah, they're a little bit too preachy, maybe, or something, I don't know. But no, I think it's been a great experience with CSU. Great people, I mean, I just met so many wonderful people. And then the chance to expand that and work overseas, it's all been just a really good experience.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Thank you. Dan, you can turn that thing-- a couple of comments from my two cents

JAMES R. MEIMAN: You're a good--