

The University of Arizona, College of Agriculture and
the Arizona Historical Society Oral History Programs

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July 12, 1993

Office of Agricultural Experiment Station

Graham: An interview with Dr. Dean F. McAlister made by Gordon Graham on July 12, 1993 at Mac's home. I'm going to say that today is July 12, 1993. It's a cloudy afternoon and we've been having kind of a hot spell and we're with Dean F. McAlister at his home sitting in the dining room looking out at his beautiful patio. You were going to say something?

McAlister: I was going to tell you what the temperature is outside. I was just out there a few minutes ago and it's only 84.

Graham: It was 100 and something about three days ago, wasn't it?

McAlister: They said yesterday it got up to 95. With all this shrubbery around, our temperature stays two or three degrees lower than at the airport where it has all that asphalt.

Graham: I've known you for a long time, Mac, and I've got a question for you. You were, as I knew you, Director of the research at the University, and your first name is Dean. Did you ever have fun with that when you were working in the university situation?

McAlister: Oh yes. You know when I really had fun with it was when I was in the Soybean Lab at the University of Illinois. I took great pleasure in calling someone around the university, on campus. I'd call - the phone would be answered by a secretary and I'd tell them, "This is Dean McAlister, would you let me talk with so and so?" She'd say, "Oh yes, Dean. I'll

get him right away."

Graham: So you used it to your advantage, then.

McAlister: Oh yes. It was kinda fun to do it that way.

Graham: Let's go back to the beginning. Where were you born and raised?

McAlister: I was born in Utah.

Graham: Go to high school there?

McAlister: I went to high school and college there and I got a Masters at Utah State, and then I went to the University of Wisconsin at Madison for a Ph.D.

Graham: Everything in Soils - or what?

McAlister: Well, Utah State has an Ag College. It's a Land Grant College and has a good Experiment Station. I got my degree there in Agronomy.

Graham: When?

McAlister: I got my degree in 1931. I got my Masters in 1932 and then I went to Wisconsin and I got my Ph.D. in 1936.

Graham: You came from Logan, Utah. Is there any relationship between your family and the Mormon religion that is rather important there?

McAlister: Well, yes. My great-granddad, Lorenzo Snow, was the fourth President of the Mormon Church.

Graham: For heaven's sakes. Did you ever know him or was he before your time?

McAlister: Well, he was President before the turn of the century, for not many years - five or six - I forget just how many, and then he died. Logan has the Temple, you know.

Graham: Was he from Logan?

McAlister: No - from Salt Lake.

Graham: Where did the family originate? McAlister - is that Scotch?

McAlister: It's Scotch. But Lorenzo Snow wasn't Scotch. My Granddad McAlister came from Scotland.

Graham: Do you have brothers and sisters?

McAlister: I was one of eight. I was next to the youngest. I have six sisters and one brother. My brother was the eldest in the family. He passed away some ten or so years ago. The next one in the family was Venice McAlister and whose name now is Venice Lindsay. She's the one, my sister, who was here and who got me the job. She ran the shop where they have movie machines and such. Anyway, she's 95 now and in Manor Care here in Tucson.

Graham: You must've been pretty well looked after if you had six sisters, then.

McAlister: I wanted to tell you that my Dad died when I was four years old. He left a widow with eight kids there in Logan and my Mother wound up earning her livelihood by taking in boarders from the college. We never suffered from lack of food or clothes or anything like that, but it was a matter of growing up with a little bit of pressure financially.

Graham: Well, that was right during the depression so you had a pretty good _____

McAlister: I'm not complaining at all about that, but I didn't have a Dad - I don't have any memories at all of him because he died from appendicitis before they had anything that

Graham: So you went from Utah State to Wisconsin and earned a Ph.D.?

McAlister: Yes, I got my Ph.D. in Plant Sciences in Physiology and I had a minor in Plant Breeding.

Graham: Okay. Then where?

McAlister: Then I went from there to a job with the USDA in Utah and their headquarters were at Logan. and the job was in the Forage Improvement Program. My job was as a Plant Physiologist and I worked with Plant Breeder Wes Keller. He was in charge. It was just the two of us and we were collaborating - cooperating with the faculty of the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station.

Graham: What were the main projects there?

McAlister: Well, I was working mainly on drought resistance in grasses and I was there from 1936 until I went into Service. I went into Service in July, 1942 and got out the end of 1945. When I got out I was still with the USDA but I had several opportunities for changes and I chose one - to be a Soybean Physiologist at the Soybean Lab at the University of Illinois.

Graham: What branch of Service were you in?

McAlister: I was in the Air Force. I was an Aviation Physiologist. Our responsibility - I went down to Aviation Cadet Center in San Antonio, Texas, for my training - was to get training in the use of oxygen equipment for high altitude flying and night vision and things connected with human physiology was what it amounted to.

Graham: But you didn't divert into human physiology when you got out of the service?

McAlister: Oh, no. I still had my job with the USDA and I had the opportunity to go to a job at Texas or the one at the Soybean Lab or another and I chose to switch to the Soybean Lab.

Graham: How long were you at Illinois?

McAlister: I was there for six years. I was there until January in 1952.

Graham: Working in soybean physiology?

McAlister: There I worked with the Plant Breeders, hopefully to improve the soybean potential for yield, etc.

Graham: Were soybeans at that time pretty much of an established crop, or were you working on a crop to help establish and develop them more?

McAlister: By 1952, the soybean was a fully established crop in the Middle West, and it was completely adapted to the Middle West more than any other place in the United States. Urbana is right in the heart of the soybean country.

Graham: Do you recall any of the people you worked with there?

McAlister: Well, gosh I'd have to stop and think about it.

Graham: When did you come out to Arizona?

McAlister: I came out in 1952. In January I was here for two or three days before the first of February when my appointment started.

Graham: Wait a minute. We've got to go back here. There's one important thing I forgot to ask. When did Ada decide that you ought to follow her around a little bit? Ada's your wife but someone listening to this might think, who's Ada?

McAlister: Well, I'd kind of like to tell you that. In about a week now we'll celebrate our 61st wedding anniversary.

Graham: Let's see - this is 1993 and 61 years ago. And where was Ada from?

McAlister: She's from Logan, also. She came there from Idaho. She came from an agricultural environment up in Downey.

Graham: You met her in college?

McAlister: She was a Senior in high school when I first met her on a dance floor. That's why we still go to dances once a week.

Graham: Oh, do you really? You like the same kind of music I do - Lawrence Welk and all that stuff.

McAlister: Oh, yes!

Graham: Tell me about your family.

McAlister: My brother, who was the oldest one in the family, went into the military in World War I and he was over at El Paso. That was a border military station trying to run down -- Geronimo, was it?

Graham: Geronimo was one that was in Mexico at that time.

McAlister: Well, he was down there in Officer's training where he had earned his commission and while he and some of his buddies were out swimming in the Rio Grande, he dove and broke his neck. It didn't kill him but it did make it so that when he finally recovered his neck was a little bit stiff and so he was let out of the assignment. He had already gotten his commission, as I said. He went back to Logan then because he was on leave from the military and finished his BS degree at Utah State and then he went into ROTC in colleges around the west, mostly.

Graham: What about your kids. Where are they and who are they?

McAlister: Okay. We have four sons. Two of them arrived at the same time, 13 years after we had been married. People said, "Serve's you right for waiting so long." We were so proud of them and we thought that was a great insult. But anyway, the twins were born just as I got out of Service and then when we came here we had one more and thought that was the limit on our family. The twins, one of them, well - all three of them - went to the University here and one in the College of Agriculture in Horticulture. He's now in the Forst Service up at Santa Fe and in charge of Recreation in one of the Districts. He has a nice three-and-a-half million dollar budget to play with. The other one is a Pharmacist. He got his degree here in Pharmacy and he's in charge of a pharmacy in the city that was the first capitol of California - Auburn. He's in charge of the Long Pharmacy in Auburn. They both enjoy their jobs. The son that was born here, Larry, is the Audio Visual Director at Cochise College and he lives at Bisbee.

Graham: Grandkids?

McAlister: We have three granddaughters.

Graham: They keep you busy?

McAlister: Well, one of them just graduated from the University of California at Santa Barbara, the youngest one is trying to come here, and the one that's the daughter of Jim over in Auburn is going to school to be a pharmacist over there in California somewhere.

Graham: Now let's go back to 1952 when you first came out to Arizona. Was that kind of a shock? Did you know what you were coming into - the weather - the climate - the situation that was here?

McAlister: Well the reason that we came out was that - well I'd been here in Tucson once before and it was a delightful visit, and exchanging correspondence with my sister, Venice, who was - I'll think of what her title was. Anyway, we had been down here and it was a delightful place to live and all, so I said, "Why don't you see if you can get me a job down there?" She knew a fellow from Logan who was a USDA man working in the College of Agriculture and he told her about the Head of the Agronomy Department having gone down into the Middle East and that job was open. He knew me and he knew my background and he said, "Why don't you apply?" I applied and my application was put in the "round" file. The Dean at that time, I forget his name, said, "My God, I'm going to check on this," and he went to a Western Experiment Station meeting and asked the Director from the Utah State Experiment Station if I was a Mormon. Walker - Roger Walker said, "Yes, he comes from a Mormon family." The Dean said, "Oh my God, I've got enough Mormons on the faculty already," and so he put my application in the "round" file. Right after that he had reached retirement and they were looking for a new Dean and Phil Eckert was appointed.

Graham: Was he appointed Dean?

McAlister: Yes. He came here as Dean of the College of Agriculture - I guess it was in 1951. Anyway, they hadn't filled the job of Head of Agronomy so he was looking through the files and he saw my application and said, "He looks pretty good - background - what happened?" The ex-Dean told him and Phil said, "Well, that's not a problem with me so LaRue (sp?) Chapman, who was from the University of Illinois - he was in the College of

Agriculture - anyway, he was going back there to visit so Phil Eckert had LaRue look me up to see whether I would be interested and what kind of a guy was I. He invited me to come down, and Ada, after he had gone through a little more checking, and I looked the job over and he looked me over and I got the job. I reported for duty then the first of February in 1952.

Graham: How big was the department then?

McAlister: Well, the department had three positions locally. There was a part-time position up the Mesa Experiment Farm - _____. There were only three regular positions in the Department of Agronomy besides the Head of the Department at that time. One of them was LaRue Chapman - he was mostly teaching. Then Howard Korris (?) who was mostly on weed control, and then Bill, I can't remember his last name. Well there were only two of them working at that time as Bill, who had been the Cotton Agronomist, had quit so that job was open. So there was only two members of the Department when I showed up. I had to start teaching Crop Ecology the first day I reported on the job.

Graham: So teaching was a pretty big part of the responsibility.

McAlister: Well, it was.

Graham: Do you remember what the research projects were? I know cotton was certainly one - citrus?

McAlister: No, that was in another Department - Horticulture.

Graham: Horticulture - okay. Vegetables?

McAlister: The breeding of crops - that was in Plant Breeding. That was headed at that time by ...

Graham: Was it Bryan?

McAlister: Walker Bryan - yes, he was Head of Plant Breeding.

Graham: Did you have any idea of working with soybeans when you came out here to see if they would grow in Arizona?

McAlister: There had been some testing of soybeans but it never did catch on and I didn't see the possibility of it fitting into the scheme of things out here because, in order to have a crop such as that you have to have a mill to handle the beans. Anyway, I wasn't too much...

Graham: What were the projects then?

McAlister: The projects at that time were weed control and LaRue Chapman did some work with forage crops and the other job was in cotton production. That was with Bill _____ down - he was oh, twenty miles down...

Graham: Was it Green Valley?

McAlister: Yes. There's a little town near

Graham: Amado?

McAlister: That's not it. Anyway, he was farming down there and he had been a very good cotton production researcher. He had worked well with Bryan and Presley and he was pushing this long-staple cotton. I'll think of Bill's last name one of these times. But anyway, he had quit. He found plenty to do with developing a new farm down there in that area.

Graham: Did you work much with the outlying Experiment Stations - or did we have outlying Experiment Stations?

McAlister: Oh yes. We had them but the cotton program at that time was being handled by the

USDA and they were over - the cotton people - on the Indian Reservation at Sacaton. The USDA cotton program, both for long and short-staple, was at Sacaton. They had, in addition to Breeder's Day, (end of 1st side of tape).

Graham: That's where the small grain was being...

McAlister: No. They had quite a group of personnel for cotton research and they had, especially, a good program in cotton breeding. They had an Agronomist and -- but it was, in my opinion at that time, that they weren't really in good contact with the Arizona cotton growers. This was a main crop, even then - both long-staple and short-staple.

Graham: By then long-staple had become one of the major crops?

McAlister: That's right. It was a special crop as developed and they were adapting varieties. Now this was where Walker Bryan came in. He's the one that developed the long-staple variety, and his program was just coming into production at that time.

Graham: Did that become "Pima" then?

McAlister: Yes.

Graham: Where did Presley enter into the thing?

McAlister: Well, Presley was working entirely on short-staple while Bryan was working on long-staple. We didn't have an Agronomist so that was one of the jobs that was filled early and we got someone to work on grains - particularly sorghum - which was becoming popular then.

Graham: What did you use sorghum for, molasses?

McAlister: No, as a grain crop.

Graham: Did that develop as a major crop? We don't grow much sorghum in this State any more, do we?

McAlister: Well, not as much, it seems to me, as we did once upon a time. I don't think we're doing as much cattle feeding as we used to. That's where we were using the sorghum grains and the small grains in general.

Graham: Okay. So you added a couple of positions. That was one of your first jobs. You saw some need right there.

McAlister: We continued to grow.

Graham: From a teaching standpoint as well as research.

McAlister: That's right. The teaching program - well, we got some people in that enjoyed teaching and were doing a good job. Very soon after that we got Massengale and K. C. Hamilton. About that time they added the people in Range Management from Botany - they didn't like to be in Botany. So we became the Department of Agronomy and Range Management for a few years and then when they decided to do something on water management in the mountains, why then the range people left us to go into a Department of Watershed Management. That back was in the days of Bob Humphrey. He was in charge at that time.

Graham: He was the renegade that caused that?

McAlister: He was part of that, yes, and that was okay. Very shortly after that, in the early sixties, the department finally became Agronomy. Bryan retired and Presley took over the Department of Plant Breeding but he wasn't particularly interested in being an administrator

so then it became the Department of Agronomy and Plant Breeding. I forget when it became Plant Sciences.

Graham: Was Lee Stith one of those in Plant Breeding?

McAlister: Yes, I hired him.

Graham: You hired Lee?

McAlister: I hired him for a job in Agronomy but he had done work in sorghum breeding over in New Mexico.

Graham: Somewhere along the line Horticulture added on to Agronomy.

McAlister: It became Plant Sciences.

Graham: So Plant Sciences included small grains, cotton, alfalfa, horticulture, citrus, vegetables . . .

McAlister: Yes, the whole works. Let's see -- I don't really think Horticulture joined at that time.

Graham: Burkhart was head at one time. I know his son and Burkhart was Head of Horticulture at one time.

McAlister: He was Head of Horticulture when I came.

Graham: The reason I know that is because I know Ford who teaches Journalism here at the University. Now you developed a lot of programs - oh, for instance, up at the Mesa Farm with Bill Fitzgibbons . . .

McAlister: You know - back in those days there was a close working relationship between the research program and production - the problems of Arizona farmers and ranchers. My philosophy had always been - maybe it was inherited from someone else - but we worked

on the basis that each person in the department would have his primary responsibility towards Arizona's agriculture and so that called for applied research for production or breeding crops for specific needs, etc.

Graham: You mean you were working with the farmers, the producers and the growers directly?

McAlister: Particularly with the County Agents.

Graham: The Extension Service.

McAlister: The way I encouraged our faculty was to have their primary effort in serving Arizona agriculture on the applied end then have - along in that program - whatever research was necessary to solve problems. In the problem-solving area you could have some basic as long as it didn't detract from the applied program that the Arizona farmers needed. I felt that our Branch Stations were especially important - everyone in the department was expected to have their program spread to the branch stations. The main ones being, of course, in the Salt River area and Yuma. At that time we had the Mesa Farm, the Cotton Research Center, which was developed in the early 1960's, and the two Yuma Farms. One was in the valley for food crop production and the other up in the sandy area on the mesa. The programs were slightly different in these two areas. And then we had the farm over at Safford and the farm out at Marana. So we had the facilities and the superintendents on the farms worked very closely with the faculty members of the Experiment Station, however they wanted to be called - the researchers. There was just a lot of work going on and that somehow seems to have gotten smaller.

Graham: The success of those programs, then, you would credit to a bunch of guys that really

enjoyed working with each other at the University, the stations and the producers along the way, too?

McAlister: That's right. They all got acquainted with the farmers because they worked with the County Agents and after they got to the point that they needed some seed increase for a plant breeder or production work after somebody found something that looked good out on the farms and ranches, why then they would go into collaboration with the County Agents and the farmers in the area.

Graham: It was a great big cooperative family. I would like to mention one guy who was a pretty good friend of yours, John Burnham, certainly didn't hurt matters any in his relation with the news media and how they could get information out through the journalistic _____.

McAlister: Right. Well, it just fit.

Graham: Well, everybody just worked together real well.

McAlister: About that time, in the 1960's, I went down to Brazil for two years.

Graham: What was that?

McAlister: Well, I was Chief of Party of the Arizona project down there with the University of Ceara.

Graham: Was that the old Point 4 program?

McAlister: It was the Agency for International Development program. They had one of their offices over on the coast and we had to collaborate with the US.

Graham: Was the project already established when you went down there?

McAlister: Yes. It was established by - well, the first Chief of Party was Bill Pistor.

Graham: I didn't know that.

McAlister: Yes. I replaced him.

Graham: What was the aim of the project?

McAlister: The aim of the project was to develop a University program in agriculture that would be somewhat similar to what we have in the States and this meant that we had to assist them and their faculty - it wasn't just at Fortaleza - there were others in the program.

Graham: In Brazil, or all over the world?

McAlister: Well, all over the world. But there was one in the Central part of Brazil and another one out on the East Coast.

Graham: Where was Fortaleza?

McAlister: Fortaleza is Northeast Brazil.

Graham: Along the coast?

McAlister: Yes, on the coast.

Graham: What sort of terrain was that - coastal plains?

McAlister: Yes. And they had an experiment farm - it wasn't much - but we tried to get it functioning to help them in their crop production and livestock programs. As I recall it there were fifteen of us down there, at the maximum between twelve and fifteen in the various department areas.

Graham: All from the University of Arizona or from all over the States?

McAlister; Our program - I guess maybe it never got to be fifteen - it was eight or nine when I was there. We were trying to help the University of Ceara develop and so we were sending

students to the University of Arizona for advanced degrees, as well as helping them get things started on a research program.

Graham: Do you recall - was this an old university or was it relatively new?

McAlister: It was one of the old ones. It was trying to develop into something that would help agriculture in Northeast Brazil.

Graham: Do you remember any of the main projects. Were they with crops primarily -- cotton?

McAlister: There wasn't much on cotton. It was big on forage crops and fruit crops and all of the areas of livestock production improvement -- poultry -- well, the whole works.

Graham: The program went on for ten or twelve years?

McAlister: Yes.

Graham: Do you feel good about the results of the input by you and the others. Did it accomplish anything - do you feel that it was a good sort of thing to have happened?

McAlister: I think that it got them started. They didn't have any program - well, it had started up a bit with the first group that went down. I was in the second group that was there. So there were things started by the time I got there so it was a matter of helping them select people that should come to the States for advanced degrees to go back down. This is the part, of course, I think - there was some help for the experiment farm that seemed to have some possibilities but I think that the program in helping them get the properly trained people to run a program in Agriculture was - I think we accomplished some of this but not the end means, that's for sure. I don't know what's been going on - it's been fifteen years since I retired.

Graham: I think there is still a close relationship. I know there are still people that come up from Brazil - come here - that still have a good feeling about the College of Agriculture.

McAlister: It was a pleasure to be down there.

Graham: What are some of the unusual things you might recall - the mud - some of the rain - bureaucracy - or some of the things along that line that might have been frustrating for you.

McAlister: Well, I'd have to think about that for a while.

Graham: All in all it was a positive experience?

McAlister: Yes. There were some discouraging things and some encouraging things. For example, as Chief of Party, Ada and I had to put on social activities that would include the Governor of the State - that type of guest. It was a completely new experience.

Graham: I wanted to ask you how Ada enjoyed it down there.

McAlister: She enjoyed it. There were bad things, too. But we've forgotten the bad things.

Graham: There were so many positive things?

McAlister: We had our own car down there and we had a nice apartment.

Graham: Did you ever go back down?

McAlister: No, I never did. It's a pretty expensive trip.

Graham: So what happened when you came back from there. You were there two years. When you left here you were Head of the Department?

McAlister: And Assistant Director of the Experiment Station. When I came back, they said I could be either.

Graham: But not both.

McAlister: I chose to be Assistant Director of the Experiment Station and my time, from then on, was with the Branch Stations.

Graham: You were Director of the Branch Stations?

McAlister: Yes - Director of the Branch Stations and the programs that were going on.

Graham: What changes have you seen in the Branch Stations in the College of Agriculture. Just any changes - I know there are a lot of changes but are there any that you are concerned about?

McAlister: Well, somehow I really hate to be critical as long as I've been separated. All of my opinions have been from talking to people as I happened to meet them. I haven't spent much time on the campus. I've talked with somebody like the Head of the Cotton Center, Bill Fitzgibbon, and he thinks it's completely gone to hell. I don't believe that, of course. But it does seem to me, Gordon, that the emphasis on working with farmers and ranchers has dropped off very much.

Graham: Particularly from that time that you mentioned a little while ago when everybody cooperated.

McAlister: That's right. The County Agents, in their programs at one time - everybody was interested in what was going on. Not so much in the areas of research -- there doesn't seem to be very much applied research going on.

Graham: We don't see the application of the fly like we did there for a while like they were breeding the flies up in the Phoenix area - the sterile flies. I listened to a radio program the other day and the person said, (I can't remember who it was.) "I think we're going to find that the

addition of these chemicals - these growth factors that we've added are not as bad as they seem. They've done their great job. There's probably just as much bad in the crops themselves as there is in the things we've added and these pesticides and the weedicides and all these have been much more of a help than they have been a detriment to human health and our production." Do you believe that?

McAlister: I think so but I also think that because of the lack of close collaboration with, say the agricultural elements that are using these chemicals, and the people that are using the products from those - that it isn't as active as it was once upon a time. That's what it seems to me. I shouldn't be . . .

Graham: It's not a question of criticism. I just was curious - we've come a long way in agriculture. We've done a lot, and a lot of that progress was made from the 1940's to the 1960's. There was tremendous progress made during those times. And that was the time when you were in there swinging with both fists.

McAlister: I wasn't alone. To me it's interesting that the effort has gone to the biotechnology thing that you hear so much about and so little any more about the . . .

Graham: Some of the things that apply right out on the farm where life is real.

McAlister: Yes. I don't hear any more about - you used to hear (end of reverse side of Tape #1)

Graham: We were discussing something about the cooperation between the County Agents and the growers and the Experiment Station. You think that caused a lot of the progress that was certainly supportive factor.

McAlister: For so many years, in the 1960's and going on into the 1970's, but particularly in the

1960's I think there was the most collaboration - cooperation - exchange of ideas and the association between the producers and the researchers, the Experiment Station people and the Extension people - the applied work and the basic work came second and to me for someone with an area such as ours, agriculturally, their work to help the producers should be the number one responsibility and then the research program to solve the problem. This biotechnology stuff - a certain amount of that is fine for a person to keep up with what's going on in his field. But these other things - helping the producers regardless of what kind they are - that should come first in a research program for this state.

Graham: Help solve the problems out on the farm where life is real?

McAlister: That's right.

Graham: Some of the Field Days were very successful then and that was certainly a collaboration between the farmers and ranchers and extension and research. People all came together to exchange ideas at the Field Day.

McAlister: Yes. There was a close collaboration - exchange of ideas and that sort of thing. It was very important.

Graham: Who are some of the people that you recall?

McAlister: Okay, let me tell you the ones I probably had the best results from cooperating. Down in Yuma, the one that I remember most is Frank Pritchard. What an excellent job he did as Director of their Station down there. He collaborated with everybody and had a good rapport with the research people as well as the people that it took to run the Experiment Farm. In the Salt River Valley, of course, there's a whole group. The first one was Dave

Apley (sp?).

Graham: I don't remember him.

McAlister: He came first. He was the one that was responsible for developing the Mesa Farm. D. Pew took over from him. Dave was good and Bill Fitzgibbon was an excellent Research Farm Manager, too, because he ran his staff well and everybody cooperated for him.

Graham: Well organized plots out on the farm.

McAlister: Yes. He worked well with both the Experiment Station and the USDA people that were located there.

Graham: How old was that station - do you remember?

McAlister: I helped develop the Cotton Research Center in the late 1950's. Harold Myers had been here for a while as Dean. That was really an effort of collaboration between the farmers, Extension, the Research people - everybody collaborated in the development of the Cotton Center. The Mesa Farm, of course, that was the earliest - it was well along when I came into the program. The guy that really developed the farm was Dave Apley. He lived on the farm - well, he lived it. Most everybody liked Dave Apley and then D. Pew did a fine job taking over from him. I can't remember the guy that was the Horticulturist over on the Citrus Farm. That fellow did a good job. Then the farm over at Safford did some good for that area but there really wasn't a big enough investment - it was a matter of where the work was needed the most and that Station didn't "shine" no matter what you did.

Graham: You mentioned Sacaton earlier. Did we have a farm there?

McAlister: No. The Sacaton Station was entirely Federal until the Cotton Research Center was developed. Then they all moved over to the Cotton Research Center.

Graham: That was USDA, then.

McAlister: Yes. They had certain acreage there on the reservation where they did their research work. There was a scientist there in taxonomy for years that did a terrific job for Arizona's basic plant identification - the whole works. I can't think of what his name is, but he never went over to the Cotton Research Center. That program was finished before they left.

Graham: I don't think you can mention the Cotton Research Center without mentioning Jeannie Schmidt.

McAlister: Oh, yes. Jeannie lived that place!

Graham: She followed on down to the "Big Mac". She worked there, too.

McAlister: You know I've never been there?

Graham: You've never been there?

McAlister: Named after me - I know all about it and I know the area and all that.

Graham: Who are some of the other people? The Wuertz's?

McAlister: Howard and Wilbur.

Graham: Any of the other cotton growers. Russ Schlittenhart, you worked with him, didn't you.

McAlister: No - but I remember that name.

Graham: Cotton ginners?

McAlister: I should remember some of the people in the feed business because they were important in introducing new varieties. I'm sorry. Maybe if I think about it a while, I can remember

some of the people's names.

Graham: Okay. What about one of your cohorts that you brought here - Martin Massengale. Whatever happened to Martin?

McAlister: Well, he's now President of the three or four universities - he's President of the whole system in Nebraska.

Graham: He was Head of Plant Sciences, wasn't he?

McAlister: I hired him and I got to have him replace me when I went to Brazil. And when I came back, he stayed on.

Graham: I didn't realize that.

McAlister: Yes. He was a terrific guy.

Graham: Where did he come from?

McAlister: He was in the military. He was one of these fantastic ones. He got his earned degrees in, I think it was Virginia and then went to Wisconsin. He got his Bachelor's degree at something like eighteen and then he went right on and got his Ph.D. and then was sucked into the military and I gave him his first job when he came out of service. He wasn't in the military so very long and I forget just what that part of his life was. It was just a short time.

Graham: You recognized the road there.

McAlister: Oh, yes.

Graham: Okay - some of the others - Harold Myers is certainly one of the people you worked closely with.

McAlister: Yes. He wasn't much of an inspiration.

Graham: He had some strong points.

McAlister: Yes.

Graham: Bill Pistor - he was a lively old codger, wasn't he?

McAlister: Yes. I remember going over to the UA Medical Center when he was sick. He bared his belly to me and showed me where they had cut him open. He was quite a guy.

Graham: Well, you've got lots of good memories from a great time. What are some of the major projects? You worked on soybeans - but as Head of the Department you never did work on much research, did you?

McAlister: No, I never had any projects of my own.

Graham: But the Fortaleza thing certainly was a successful project that can be credited to you as well as the soybean work that you did back in Illinois. You worked with the organizations here in the state, I'm sure.

McAlister: I tell you that I had a good feeling about the relationship I had with the seed industry and the Crop Improvement Association. The seed industry was important to all the crops and they cooperated and actually collaborated in parts of the program where we needed help.

Graham: And certainly they intermingled with the Animal Science Department because you were kind of the fuel for some of their products.

McAlister: I guess the one that I enjoyed most was Carl Rubicek. We really saw eye to eye.

Graham: Is there anything else that you ought to put down on this - something we haven't talked about?

McAlister: I can't think of anything at the moment.

Graham: You will tonight.

McAlister: You know, the funniest thing was that I couldn't remember Howard Cord's (sp?) name - one of the two guys that was here when I came. I had about a half-hour's nap and then that name came to me.

Graham: Well, you certainly have made a lot of friends around the state and had an enjoyable time while you were here. I know, from working with you, that you contributed a tremendous amount.

With that, we're going to close off with Dean F. McAlister and from here we'll get this down on typewriter type and you'll get a chance to review it and make any additions or corrections.

McAlister: Okay. I'll spend time with it.

Graham: We're going to start the tape back up again because Mac wants to talk just a little about the Crop Improvement Association. The fellow that I knew was Bob Sackett who came down here from Wyoming. I worked with him in Wyoming.

McAlister: He's presently retired from it. The one that was the Manager of the Crop Improvement Association when I came was Harold Jacka. I used to go with him to meet with the farmers that were having their crops certified for seed production and he introduced me to the commercial people in the seed industry in Arizona. They have been, and I guess still are, a very important part of the crop programs - both from the improvement standpoint and the production.

Graham: What was the responsibility of the Crop Improvement Association?

McAlister: There's one in every State in the United States.

Graham: Is that state or federal?

McAlister: It's state and there is a National Association. They are the agency that maintains the purity of the seed varieties that are used commercially. There is a very definite sequence of events that are followed from the time that a new variety of any of our crops, both field and horticultural - a very definite program that goes from the time that the seed leaves the breeder, who developed the variety, all the way up until the time that it gets out for farmer use. There's a very closely watched program that keeps the seed pure as the original seed production goes on from the variety is used. There's the registered seed that is grown on a particular acreage and is inspected for any mixtures. If there are mixtures, it is not used as a "named" variety. The registered seed goes out to somebody who produces the seed that's going to be used by the growers and the person then that runs this whole program is the Secretary of the Crop Improvement Association - Harold Jacka and then Bob Sackett.

Graham: Who finances this program?

McAlister: The seed growers.

Graham: Do they have a Board of Directors?

McAlister: Yes. It costs money to get your seed certified as being a particular variety. The farmer that grows it has to pay a certain . . .

Graham: He would have trouble selling it if he didn't have it certified.

McAlister: That's right.

Graham: What relationship does the Seed Improvement Association have with the College of Agriculture?

McAlister: The College of Agriculture provides office space and that's about it. They have been out at the Campbell Avenue Farm but while I was there, their office was in the Ag Building.

Graham: So that was a close tie with producers?

McAlister: Yes. The President of the Crop Improvement Association is a farmer - a seed grower, and the Directors are all in the business. It is a very credible association and the business of keeping the varieties of field and horticultural crops ..

Graham: Horticulture, too?

McAlister: They handled the certification of fruit trees, but not - I guess the Crop Improvement Association only handles field crops. There is an association in horticulture, too, but I'm not familiar with that one.

Graham: Is that it for now - ready to sign off?

McAlister: Yes.