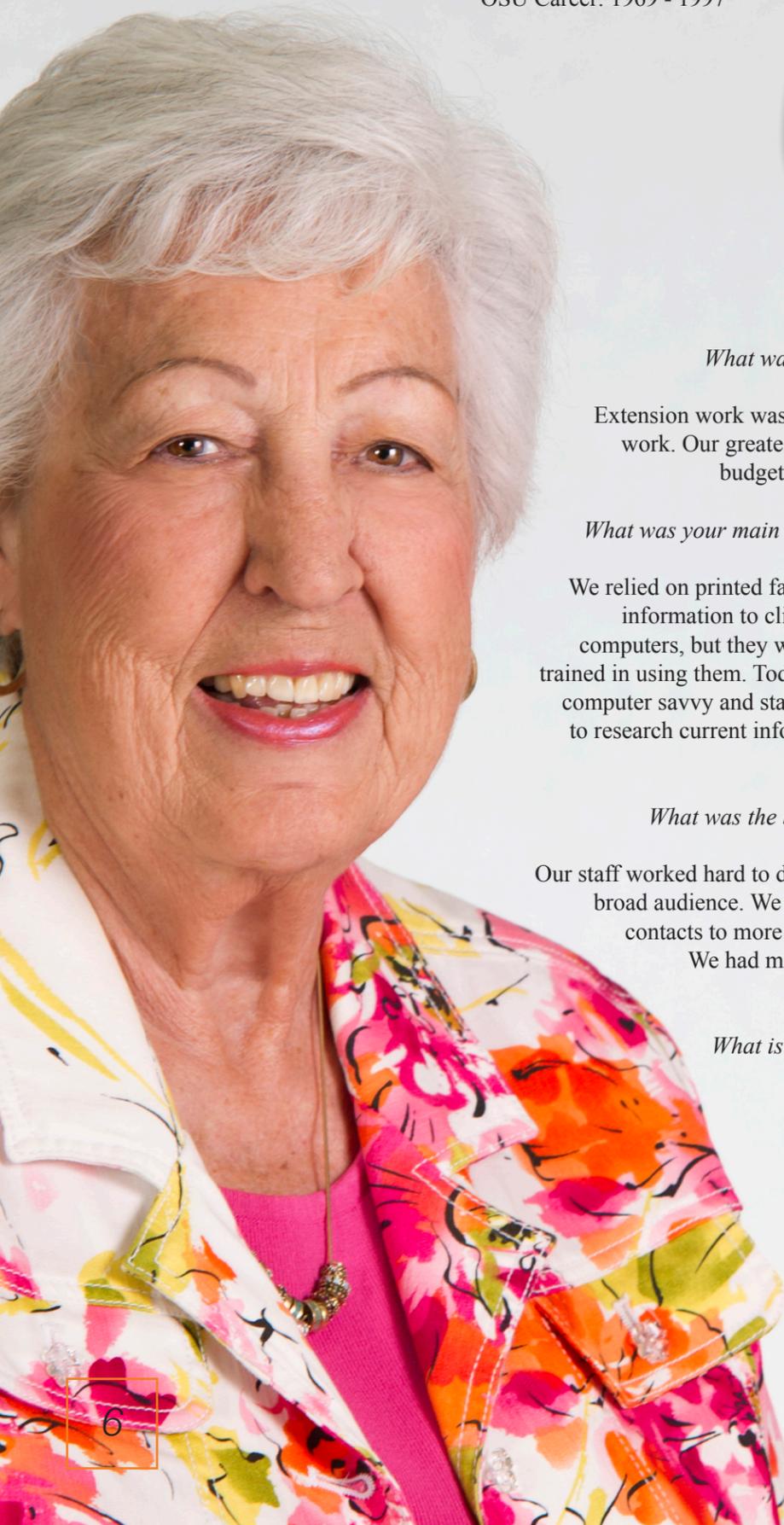


Jan Montgomery

OSU Career: 1969 - 1997



Q&A

Our world has changed drastically over the course of 100 years, and Extension is no exception. The methods of delivering research-based information to the public have gone from shouting off the back of trains to using social media outlets. Jan Montgomery and Jeff Edwards provide personal insight about their Extension careers both past and present, respectively.

Jeff Edwards

OSU Career: 2004 - Present



What was your greatest challenge working in Extension?

Extension work was very challenging, requiring long hours and hard work. Our greatest challenge was very much as it is today, county budgets and high visibility for our Extension programs.

What was your main method for delivering information to the public?

We relied on printed fact sheets, newsletters and other means of getting information to clients. There were a few Extension users who had computers, but they were rare in county offices, and we were not fully trained in using them. Today, we have new audiences who are mostly very computer savvy and staffs who are very well trained in using computers to research current information and deliver information to clients much more quickly.

What was the biggest change in Extension during your tenure?

Our staff worked hard to design programs that were relevant and reached a broad audience. We were involved in going from a lot of one-on-one contacts to more of a leader-led approach to delivering programs. We had many group meetings addressing current problems and concerns.

What is Extension's greatest challenge moving forward?

I feel that Extension's greatest challenge in the next several years will be dealing with a much younger audience that is working full time on jobs outside the home. They also need to stay involved with the needs of larger landowners, corporate ranchers and farmers, as well as meet needs of local homeowners with urban horticulture needs. Extension workers of the future will be working closely with small business owners, local chambers of commerce and organized efforts to increase new businesses.

What drew you toward a career in Extension?

I enjoy public speaking, solving problems and helping people. Extension allowed me to do all three and live in a college town while doing so.

What has been Extension's greatest contribution during your time?

I feel the land-grant university system and Extension have done an outstanding job of increasing the agronomic knowledge of our clientele. This solid base of agronomic knowledge has allowed farmers to become early adopters of new technologies, often before we have had a chance to thoroughly evaluate the technologies.

What has been the biggest change in Extension during your tenure?

The use of technology. When I started with Extension, most people used email but did so from a desktop computer. Smartphones are now the norm and emails and texts generally result in faster response times than phone messages.

What is your main method for delivering information to the public?

The goal is to provide information in whatever format the consumer is most comfortable with, so I use a mixture. I still write fact sheets and current reports, but I rarely print hard copies anymore because most people prefer to view an electronic version and print it at home.

What is the importance of Extension for the state of Oklahoma?

I like to measure importance based on whether you made a difference in someone's life. When you help a farmer solve a problem or make a change that will increase their profitability, you have helped someone improve their family's ability to succeed.

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