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Charles Cole

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Charles Cole & Pat Deckert Oral History

Charles Cole served the state of Texas as a math teacher, school principal, and finally as a Texas Education Agent, where he eventually oversaw the state child nutrition programs. Pat Deckert was a food service director and later a food broker before finishing her career as a consultant with the Texas Education Agency.

SS: My name is Sandy Sadler and I am at the Southwest Regional office of USDA and it is August 4, 2006 and I am here with Patricia Deckert and Charles Cole, two well-known names in Texas child nutrition programs. It's truly a pleasure to be here with the two of you today.

SS: Pat, I will start with you and will you start with telling us a little bit about where you were born and reared and what your earliest recollections of child nutrition programs are?

PD: Ok, Well, I was born in Houston and then when I was a year old we moved out to Cedar Bayou, Texas which is on the outskirts of Bay Town. My mother was in school lunch, she was a cafeteria lady and that was all the way through my school years. And then she retired when I got out of

school. Guess she didn't have to watch out after me anymore! And then I had a family and went back to school and got my degree in Home Economics, Teacher Education, and Foods. I was beginning my teaching career when I got the opportunity to be a food service director...which I didn't really know what a food service director was. But, the school district needed somebody because the food service director quit right before school started and so I was talked into the job. It would also work with my children's school schedule (so they said), the same hours as the teacher and everything. So, that's how I actually got into the child nutrition program. Before that, about all I knew was what I knew about what my mother had done. By the way, in 1947 her monthly paycheck, her net, was eighty dollars.

SS: A month?

PD: Yes. And so that I knew, plus I gave my child forty cents every morning to buy her lunch and she came home everyday and told me that she ate chili. And so that's pretty much what I knew about school lunch.

SS: When you took this position?

PD: Yes, but it did not take me long to find out that I loved school lunch and school milk, they called it in those days, that was in 1969. I was at the Deer

Park Independent School District in Texas, which was a wonderful school district, and had wonderful staff and I just had wonderful teachers [and] the managers who taught me so much. And so, it was a great experience over time.

SS: And you've stayed with it for how many years now?

PD: About thirty-seven years now in various things that I've done.

SS: Can you give us just an overview of the other various jobs that you have done in child nutrition programs?

PD: Well, I worked there at Deer Park for five years and then I decided that all the people that came in to sell groceries to me knew nothing about the food that they were selling. They couldn't answer the questions. They would tell us things about it that, you know, they would tell you what ever you wanted to hear about it. And I got the opportunity to work for a food broker as one of the first people who visited school lunches and really knew something about school lunch. So I did leave there and go to work for a food brokerage firm in Houston. And I stayed there two years and decided that the travel was just too much. And about that time Charles Cole, who had known me through the program when I was at Deer Park, and then my predecessor Artis Percy, had recommended me to come to the agency.

And I didn't the first time but then after two years with the brokerage firm I came to work for the Texas Education Agency in the Houston area as the consultant there and Charles Cole was my boss. That was a great day, 1976.

CC: When was that?

PD: 1976

CC: 1976, my God! [Laughing]

SS: And you stayed with Texas Education Agency until...

PD: I actually finished my career under the program which somewhere around 1992 or so they decided to move the consultants jobs into the Regional Educational Service Centers and instead of eight of us being in the state of Texas where we covered the whole state, the eight of us, they had twenty service centers and so we had twenty consultants there, Educational Consultants is what they called us. And so from 1992 to 1999 I was there at the Region Four Education Service Center in Houston. When I became consultant for the service center, I was not in compliance any longer, because service centers do not do compliance. So that was one part of my job that I didn't do and my territory was smaller. Prior to that I

had a hundred and four school districts in eighteen counties and after that I had fifty-six school districts in seven counties.

SS: And did only technical assistance?

PD: Technical assistance, training and that sort of thing.

SS: Well thank you so much! Mr. Cole, tell us a little bit about yourself, where you were born and reared?

CC: Well, I was born in a little community in northeast Texas called Cason and it is still my hometown in a sense because we still have property there.

And I went to school in a three-room school and I went through the seventh grade in a three-room school. And I remember school lunch to this extent. Most of the time we would carry like a sausage and biscuit for lunch but somewhere in the thirties, late thirties or early forties, one of the rooms was a little cafeteria and the only thing that I can remember that we had was chicken stew. Seems like we had it every day. I think it was because the government maybe was providing the chicken. And then I graduated from the school and transferred over to the Daingerfield High School and went to college and got my Bachelors Degree in Mathematics and Education and taught for three years. Then went to the University of Texas and got my Master's there in Mathematics and Business

Administration. And the superintendent, when he was in Austin, called me and said, "Say Charles, how would you like to be a school principal?" I said, "Well I got three years in and I have an administrative certificate," so I said that I would give it a whirl. So I got back to Daingerfield about two weeks before school starts, we move back from Austin, and he said, "Oh, by the way, your going to be in charge of the school cafeteria too. When we moved the faculty and the principal out of the old school, which you are going to be principal, into the new school, he took about half of the cooks and I decided to go ahead and let the food service director go because we are losing money anyway." He said "You need to hire a lunchroom manager and some cooks," and it was two weeks before school started. So I went down to the Piggly Wiggly grocery store and the lady was down there checking out and I said, "How would you like to be a lunchroom manager?" (Laughter) She said, "Well, I've never been a lunchroom manager," and I said, "Well, I haven't either." So she said ok and so we...there were menu cards. Do you remember menu cards? (Question to Mrs. Deckert)

PD: Yes.

CC: I said, "Ok!" She was in the office and I said, "Let's get those menu cards

and we will learn together.” I said, “Let’s take the first five menus and we buy for those five menus for about a month and then we will get five more and buy for that.” So literally we learned together until she learned how to do it and then I faded out. But that was my first experience in school lunch.

SS: I did not know that!

CC: I know you didn’t! (Laughing)

SS: I did not know that you were a food service director.

CC: I guess because of that experience I have always had a kindness in my heart for the small school and for the little lady that had to do it all.

Anyway, I was the school principal and had other duties in the school district and we had an accreditation visit. The Director of Accreditation visited my school and after he finished he kind of liked what he saw and he said, “How would you like to become a Texas Education Agent?” I said, “Well, I haven’t even thought about it.” So anyway, he said, “I’ll tell you what, you think about it and if you are interested then you have a job in accreditation.” So we thought about it and we had a couple of youngsters then and it was quite a move from northeast Texas, psychologically a move. So we decided to do it and we went to Texas Education Agency in ‘67 and a couple years later I was there in Accreditation and Management

Information and the Deputy Commissioner saw me one day in the hall and said “Hey, I want to talk to you about another job, we need somebody over in the school lunch because the gentleman is getting ready to retire and this program is getting big. Let’s see, this was ‘69 and the Child Nutrition Act of ‘66 really added to it. And I said, “Well, I don’t really know if I want to get involved in that,” and he said, “Well, we would like to get you in there,” and I said, “Well, ok.” He said, “Well, you go ahead and take the job and if you don’t like it, I will find you something else.” Well, after being in there for a little while it was so frustrating, federal regulations, they were just “eating my lunch.” I was not used to federal regulations. But I will tell you what, after getting to know, after shaping up the staff a little [laughter], and getting to know the school lunch people, I really had never seen a group of people that were so interested in what they did and so interested in boys and girls. And they were just so good at what they did I said, “You know, this is good.” So he saw me in the hall and said, “You want to stay with that?” I said, “I’ll tell you what, if you’ll just leave me alone and let me run the program like it ought to be run, I’ll just stay where I am.” He said, “The only time you will have to come and see me is when you want to, so don’t worry about it.” Well anyway, that’s kindly how I got started in the

school lunch; from a three-room school in northeast Texas to the Texas Education Agency. So I have seen the size of schools from that three-room school with about forty students to forty thousand at the University of Texas when I got my Master's there, so I have seen all sizes. And particularly when I was in the School of Accreditation, I got to see many, many schools when we accredited the schools and of course we always ate in the cafeteria. So I got to see the large schools and the small schools. So when I was in the school lunch I had a good feeling of the schools and the size of schools in the state of Texas.

SS: Well you kind of touched on one of my questions for you and that is that across the state of Texas, you were known for keeping things simple. You said often and people still remember you for the big chief tablet and the cedar pencil which were the tools you felt that any job could be accomplished with, and that's how you ran your administration. And as you said, you were very much in touch with the kitchen folks and keeping it simple for them. And one thing that both Pat and I admire a lot about you is that you always took a regulation and refined it to the point that people met the requirement but did not exceed it and that they could do it as simple as possible. So where did that philosophy come from?

CC: Well, I think that it came from my experience that I just spoke about. I realized that we really spent a lot of time reading the federal regulations and I really communicated a lot to the USDA, [asking them,] “What do you mean by this?” and “We have to do this, or you want us to do this?” And what I tried to do with every federal regulation was to find out what we had to do to get the federal money to send out to the schools because the state had an agreement with USDA that we would administer the programs according to federal regulations. And so I wanted to know “What do we have to do?” and then we were trying to put it in a simple form as we could and redraft it and send it out to the schools. Now some states would just literally send out the federal regulations. But last week, I was in a restaurant in northeast Texas where I have lunch just about everyday with a group of gentlemen, some in the cattle business, some in different kinds of professions, house builders, etc. And as I was leaving a guy called me over and said, “Charles, come over here,” and he was with his eighty-five year old mother. And he said, “Mother, this is Charles Cole!” And she said, “Oh Mr. Cole, I used to be Head Cook down in a little school district in northeast Texas.” And she said, “Oh, I used to get all of your letters!” [Laughter] I said, “Bless your heart,” and she said, “I did the best I could, I

did the best I could [and] you know, I was Head Cook and didn't have help much. Well now there's that lady that's receiving the same regulation and has to follow the same regulations that Houston or New York City has to follow. She's the menu planner, she's the cook, she's the Head Cook, she's the purchasing agent, she approves free meal applications and she does it all, whereas the Houston School District must have had how many doing all of those?

PD: Oh a huge, huge staff.

CC: Right! So I had always thought in my mind when we were sending these regulations out, I had always thought of the people in the smaller schools. You know, this is a tough program to administer and sometimes I don't think that we realize at the state and federal level, certainly the federal level, that we have a group of people in a program that many do not have high school diplomas, much less college. And then we have people on the other end that are Ph.D in Nutrition. They are trying to follow the same regulation and sometimes the group that is the most influential on what we do are the people with the highest degree and sometimes with the lowest in intelligence. [Laughter]

SS: I second that!

CC: Anyway, it sounds good what you are doing. I read one of these things, it's called the Nutrition Based Menu Planning. Now how would this little lady do this in her little head?

PD: It would be impossible for her.

CC: How would she do that?

SS: She wouldn't. And actually that's my next question to Pat. Mr. Cole had talked about the complexity of the program but that is from his perspective when he retired. And you admittedly said that you left it to your successor and you have really moved on to other business. Pat, how have you seen the program change since Mr. Cole left, including the Nutrient Analysis Menu Planning?

PD: Ok, I'll tell you about that but before we leave the big chief table and the cedar pencil, I have to tell you that I was teaching a class just this week here in Dallas and in this particular class I had twenty-five really dear food service people. And I had just exactly what he said from a school that had K-6 through a large school. In that class I asked, "How many of you are automated," because that's one of the changes, you're asking me about changes, that many, many programs are technically automated in almost every way. And we had one lady in there who said that she still used a

tablet and pencil. And she told me that she had thirty years in school food service, and I said then you remember Mr. Cole, and you remember the big chief tablet and the cedar pencil. So, it has come a long way for many school districts with that and the regulations are complicated, the training has followed along too [because] we did a lot of training back in those days to train them for what they were doing. But we now have certification programs through what was the Texas Food Service Association is now the Texas Association of School Nutrition. And classes are offered, certifications, and standards of excellence and all of those. So the training has been good and I have seen them move to maybe a higher level of doing all of those requirements and regulations and everything. I sometimes think that they don't have enough time to spend on the food and feeding the children. Many of them tell me, this week many of them said "Oh, if we could just feed children," I said, "Yeah, but it doesn't really work that way," because there's a lot, a lot of money going into these programs and we do have to have regulations in order to meet nutritional requirements. So I have seen the patterns change from the pattern of a Type A we called it and then we moved into the terminology that was food based and then the Nutrient Standard Method and then the Assisted Nutrient Standard and the

Enhanced, which gave more, and everybody knows about all of those so that people had their choices of what they could offer.

SS: And don't forget any reasonable approach.

PD: And any reasonable approach, I am not sure that many people took any reasonable approach although there were a few that I remember that got special dispensation from the state to plan it within approved guidelines to do whatever they wanted to do. That training and those changes in menu planning, there's probably a lot more paper and a lot of trees that have gone down the tube with making paper for training and for sending out regulations and that may be lessening now because of electronic communications. The most amazing thing to me [pointing], Mr. Cole, one of the last things that he did, was he said, "I am going to give ya'll a gift I think, I am not sure, but I think that it's a gift. I'm going to get computers for all of your offices." There were eight of us then and so we all got computers and they gave us training classes for it and we learned how to use that. Well I was amazed when we first started that and then they began to do things electronically to send claims to the state office where we had done paper claims and the state office would process stacks and stacks of them and now they do that electronically. But the thing that I

always thought is, “Oh my goodness, these ladies in the kitchen and these computers, what is going to happen?” It really is amazing how many of those are computer literate, they’ve had the training courses and they are doing everything by computer in their kitchens. And then we have that person who is concentrating more on the other things and she is doing her paper work just like she always did the paper work. So there is still a wide variety. We’ve got over a thousand school districts in Texas and a lot of charter schools and there’s such a variety from the way that they do things.

SS: From my perspective, I just see the paper piling up. In particular now we have the HACAP program. Can you give us a little insight into that, the documentation that is now required for HACAP?

PD: Ok. The HACAP, Hazard Analysis Critical Analysis Points is to have food safety, to protect the food. And we’ve used a pile of paper yes in training for that but the process is such that you go through many steps in order to ascertain that the food from every step from receiving through storage through preparation through serving and through storage again cooling leftovers, all of that kind of thing, meet the steps. Every menu has to be analyzed, everything on the menu to see at what point could it become contaminated. And so we did a lot of training which was pretty difficult for

a lot of people. And I think they realized that it was difficult and they are simplifying that and the Institute is simplifying some of the things on that. But copies have to be redone for HACAP and USDA has done that and temperatures have to be taken. You know, there were two things that we never could find in a kitchen when we went in to do compliance. One of them was the Food Buying Guide to teach those who tell them "How much food did you use" and they were like "Oh well, we used this much," and I was like "Well, let me see your Food Buying Guide," and it would be down in some drawer and in one case I found it in the bathroom on a shelf. So that and a thermometer.

CC: Any pages missing?

PD: No! The thermometer was another thing, and a scale. They didn't use the scales. You would ask them, "Well let me have your scales. I need to weigh this meat," and it would either not be there at all or it would be on the top shelf of the storage cabinet or something like that. Now they are using thermometers several times during the preparation and everything. So we are keeping the food safe (jokingly states: Not sure that we killed several kids way back when.)

SS: Well, that's really true. It seems that, and I think that it's good that we want to serve wholesome food, but I am not sure how large the problem was before we began fixing. It reminds me of a saying that Mr. Cole use to say and that was...

CC: Well, you know really in thinking that sounds good and it is, but in thinking back as a school principal I cannot recall a parent coming to school the next day saying, "My kid was sick because of school lunch," and I don't know why. You know really, you did not think that they were that attentive to it, but yet they were because they were mamas themselves. They just used good common sense.

SS: Well that is another thing about this time. A lot of the people that we get, entry-level people, are not cooks.

PD: Right, they are not cooks [and] they bring different cultures in too, and different ways of cleanliness, and lack of cleanliness, and habits, and things of that sort, so it really is a needed thing.

CC: Um, hum, you bet.

PD: And that's one of the things in order for people to be certified at the state level, they must take sanitation and safety. His old saying was, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

SS: Pat, I see that you brought your abacus. Tell us a little about that in that we were talking about Nutrient Standard Menu Planning.

PD: Ok, this was in 1970. [Leaning in to ask Mr. Cole] I think that this was before you were Director, right? Mr. Hicks was still Director?

CC: Well, let's see... '69 to '70, somewhere along in there.

PD: Well in 1970 I believe it was, there was a pilot program for the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning system. And there were three of us in Texas selected to do that. And I did it there in my Deer Park School District and we went to Colorado State for training. And this was our computer (holding the abacus), this is what we did in menu training. And I would sit with this abacus and I had a little book too, along with it that listed all of the foods and I was to plan the nutrients in it. There were white bands on these beads here and you read the book in looking for calories and one food would have enough for one bead and then looking for fat, there would be the beads over here (pointing) and on down, for all the nutrients that we now have into the technical program. So, when you got over here, and a little circle was here, you had all of the calories that you needed, but you might be lacking in some nutrients so you would have to go back and put something else on the menu, and here we were. When you got all of the

little rings on it, [pointing] all the way over here, then your menu was ok.

Then we did send those to Colorado State and they fed them into their huge computers that they had back in those days and evaluated them, sent them back to us, told us what we were missing. Most of the time mine were short of thiamin, and often vitamin A or vitamin C might have to have a little boost, so this was basically how I did that planning.

SS: Were the menus similar to the Pattern Based Menus?

PD: They were quite similar. It gave the flexibility of those menu items that children just did not really care for, of not serving those. Like pizza had come into being about that time and kids didn't like really much other than pizza, so if you could get pizza and one vegetable and a desert and a milk you could pretty much get your nutrients in. That was something that it offered. Very often menus turn out looking like type-A menus but it did give that flexibility for not having to take five things on your tray and be sure [because] even in those days you had to have butter on your tray everyday.

SS: I remember that.

PD: My first compliance review, Mrs. Pearcy came out to do, and we were just making it perfect and we got over to the high school and there was not

butter and I got written up for not having butter on the tray. So you know, things change and evolve. But this little guy, I'm going to part with this little guy, he's going to go to the University of Mississippi to the Institute, and they are going to have it in the Archives there, or whatever they decide to do with it.

SS: Thank you so much Pat!

PD: As you can see it is not very sophisticated, somebody did this in their little shop.

SS: Was there Offer vs. Serve at that time?

PD: No! I think that Offer vs. Serve came in about 1978.

CC: Yeah, in the late seventies or so.

PD: And I have to tell you, there are parts of it that people still don't understand.

SS: That's true, and schools that don't have it in place. Well Charles, isn't it in the seventies there was public outrage about the waste in schools. Could you give us some insight into that?

CC: About the what, now?

SS: Waste in schools, and how Offer vs. Serve came about?

CC: Well, we were all concerned about food waste and what really would get concern is when a carton of milk would be thrown in the garbage. And of course the guy collecting the garbage had some hogs so he didn't mind... Everyone was concerned about that and the food waste and I still to this day in thinking about it, and I don't think about it often (laughter), have mixed emotions about Offer vs. Serve. It has some pluses and minuses. Certainly it would eliminate the food waste. And I know we had some schools that would put a carton of milk on a tray and take it off so that we could say that we served it. But anyway, there are pluses and minuses. The plus is that you don't waste the food, but the minus is if that food is not on that child's plate, he's not going to learn how to eat. Then there is a kid next door who can drink more than one half pint of milk so they give it to him so that it will be utilized instead of thrown away. So I don't know, I think that the Offer vs. Serve had some good points and it had some points that were not so good. And I, to this day, it is a toss up in my mind.

SS: Pat, was it difficult to implement Offer vs. Serve in the schools?

PD: Well, of course the school principal and the educators want to get the kids through, want them to go through, and if they were not trained properly and did not educate the kids to Offer vs. Serve, how to make their

choices, and that sort of thing it certainly could slow the lines down and still does slow down the lines. If the servers don't understand it, then it really can. But if everybody understands it and they go right on through, then it does at least give the child the opportunity to turn down things that they do not want. I don't know how much they save actually still because sometimes people just still plan more than they need, they don't learn the process of cutting back the amounts that they prepare based on the production record history that they have. But I tend to think that it is a good thing most of the time and I do know that it can be taught to little bitty kids. And I know the children, the boys and girls of one of the school districts that I went [to] when Offer vs. Serve first came in, people said, "Oh my, elementary can't do this." And I went down to Lake Jackson, actually Brazosport School District, and the early childhood children came in and they were doing Offer vs. Serve. The director had taught the teachers about it and had the full cooperation of everybody and so it worked fine. So that gave me the basis when people told me that it wouldn't work, to say that maybe we could work with it a little more and get it done. I saw some other instances where it just worked really well because of the way that teachers bought into it, but mostly teachers began to not want to be

too interested being in the cafeteria and were not there as often and so they maybe did not help as much with it.

SS: So really it was most successful in those schools where everybody bought into the concept.

PD: Yes, and I guess it still is. Somehow it's just hard for some women to still get the concept of fruits and vegetables being two food items and their one component, three-fourths cup, and them not having to take both, or not having to take meat, or not having to take milk. I had people in my class this week that said, "You mean that they don't have to take the entrée, they don't have to take meat, and they don't have to take their milk?" And I'm like, "No!"

SS: Is it constant training?

PD: It is; it is. So trainers will always have their jobs.

SS: That's true. Charles, I was not in Texas at the time that [seeing] labels were born. But when I was in the state office I did a lot of reading in the files and I saw lots of communication between you and USDA, and you requesting the definition of lean meat. And so I would love to hear about how that all began.

CC: Well, I don't know what meeting we were in; I went to so many meetings back in those days. Let me back up just a little. Back when we first started in school lunch when I was a school principal helping the cafeteria, we did not have available to buy pre-packaged or pre-prepared or engineered foods. We cooked from, we just didn't cook from scratch, we cooked from it. We went further back than scratch. So we did not have the situation then that developed, as I was being State Director. And our supervisors, our lunchroom consultants, area consultants, would send in labels and we would see all of these prepared foods that were being served. You see, industry didn't get...follow the money, follow the money. You can follow the money from on moving child nutrition from Texas Education Agency to the agriculture, follow the money. And there really wasn't a lot of money in school lunch back in those days. And industry really did not get real interested in it until after 1986, when we started having free lunches and all of this money started flowing into the school lunch program. Well, industry, and it was good that they did get interested in it of course. They said, "Hey, there's some money there and there's some business there." So they began to prepare foods that could be used in the school lunch program. Well, when you started looking at the labels

and trying to say how it met two ounces of cooked lean meat, it would be very difficult for a two ounce breaded beef patty to meet two ounces of cooked lean meat. And then it all boiled around lean meat and having been in the cattle business all my life, I [though about] lean meat, two ounces of cooked lean meat. I was in a meeting somewhere with a bunch of feds and it was some Washington feds, and I said, "What is lean meat?" They looked at me like they thought I was crazy. They said, "What?" I said, "What is the definition of lean meat?" And they said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, I mean what is the definition of lean meat?" I said, "If you take the horns, and the hide, and the hoof off of a steer then all you have left is the bone and the meat." And I said, "Now what part of that is lean and what part of that is fat, and how much fat is in lean?" Well, they started looking at each other and said, "Well, I guess that we are going to have to get back to you on that." Anyway, at the same time I had put together a presentation on What's in a Meal? And I was making that presentation around different places and our USDA regional office, I had made it to some State Directors there, and some State Directors and our USDA regional office got to thinking about the same thing and got to looking at their product analysis forms. So I was invited to go to Wyoming, to Colorado, to

Arkansas, and to Louisiana, and present to the state Food Service Directors and in their state meetings. And of course, when presenting that to them and pointing out some things they got to thinking about it. And I never will forget, it was in Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas, and they had their state Food Service Directors meeting and my presentation fell right before lunch. And in my presentation I would start if off by Type-A meal requirements, how do you meet Type-A meal requirements, this is the requirement how to cook lean meat. Then I would show them some overhead projection transparencies of product analysis forms, and the ingredient statement, and our order magnitude, we would go through all of that. Then I had two or three special transparencies. One of them was Vienna sausage in little pieces. And that was literally served in a school in Texas. It had lymph nodes, salivary glands, and beef stomachs in it. Then I had a sausage one that had something similar to that in it. In order to impress my audience, the food service people, in order to impress them to go back and look, I would have a little fun and say, "Well, how do you like your lymph nodes and when do you buy salivary glands?" Well, that happened to be right before lunch that day, and of course after a presentation like that people come up and ask questions and want to talk to you, and I guess that it was

for thirty minutes after twelve. And the way they had theirs planned was pretty good. They had these company people, the vendors, out in the halls and all around this ballroom and in another ballroom adjoined, and they had prepared little products and the Food Service Directors would go out and sample and nibble and that would be their lunch and we wouldn't have to break for lunch and then we would come back at about two or three o'clock and they were sampling the food that the company people would want to sell to the schools. I got out there nearly fifteen to one and there was a guy standing near his table and he was looking at his, he had a sausage, and he said, "I just don't understand it." I said, "What's the matter partner?" He said, "You know, hadn't anybody gotten any of that sausage!" [Laughter] He said, "You know, usually that's first to go [and] hadn't anybody wanted any of that, and I don't understand it." I said, "Well, let me try one of them." I said, "That's pretty good, what's in it?" He said, "Oh, that's just sausage," but said, "That's good." I said, "Yeah, but you don't know what's in it?" He said, "No, I don't know what's in it, but it's good." And I think that maybe back in those days that's the way that they sold stuff. They did not know what was in it but it was good. And it was good. But anyway, the reason of course [was that] he hadn't heard the

presentation that I had given or he may not have wanted to eat any either. Anyway, after that, about the same time we had a meeting in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. And it was not on the big program and a group of us got to the side... (questioning Mrs. Dillard), Do you remember Rita Sullivan? God, she must have been about sixty then, she was old. [Laughter] Anyway, Rita was a really fine lady; she was a consultant over here at the USDA regional office. So she met with us and we talked about how can we find out about what's in this meat products and how can we meet the requirements. I would say one sure way, and I would tell the audience on these presentations, to serve two ounces of that cheese along with that meat product and you would meet it. [Laughter} But anyway, after that and I don't remember, soon after this, we began to see our first seeing labels. And it's kindly developed since then to be a very useful tool in meeting the requirements.

SS: Oh, that's the truth; it's a very useful tool. Because I think today, more than ever, that we use more frozen prepared products, don't you agree

Pat?

PD: Oh yeah!

SS: And it is difficult to purchase and identify what ingredients are in each of the products that are offered with each bid.

PD: They tell me just this week that a lot of schools are going back to scratch on a lot of things and that is going to be interesting to see because its hard to find good cooks and people who can read recipes but it's a trend. That would be nice, to have a mix of the two.

CC: The seeing label, and I had some company people that were not too happy with me, but yet after they understood it, they understood to make two ounces of cooked lean meat, they had to do something to show that they did. But they had to go through not only trouble, but [also] expense, and they had some very popular food items that no way would meet the requirements. Fortunately, I had a good rapport with those guys and I always presented at the industry seminar and knew most of them. But at first they were just not very happy about it, but after they saw and understood that we had to find some way to meet meal pattern requirement, the two ounces of cooked lean meat, after they saw that because to certify one of those things, you had to go to a lot of trouble and expense to have it analyzed or whatever.

SS: That's right.

CC: It's kindly interesting, yesterday I was buying some, we are having a drought and it's awful dry, I was buying some feed for some cattle and every time I buy something I look at the product analysis and on this 20% protein feed it had product analysis on it. Well we learned that the first item in order magnitude it was more than the first one than the second one, the third one and right on down the line. Well on this product analysis it was corn was the first item, another type of corn was the second item. Well corn only has about 8 percent of protein and I thought, "well, how in the world are they going to have more corn of this kind of corn and the second most of this kind of corn, how in the world are they going to get up to 20 percent, no way! So I called the company in Oklahoma and fortunately I got the owner of the company that makes the feed and he said, "Well, you are really knowledgeable of these product analyses." And I said, "Well yeah, I have had some experience." He said, "There's a difference in cow feed." He said, "The first one does not in order of magnitude...and we can list them any way we want to, but in human it is." And I thought that was interesting.

SS: Yeah that's interesting. Well the other thing that the seeing label does is bring equality to products in the competitive purchasing process because

you at least can identify that the product provides two ounces of meat alternate where prior to that one might provide one ounce and one might provide two and it takes a lot of research to discern the difference in products. So it really has been a very useful tool and anything you contributed to that effort we thank you for because we're using it today much as ever.

PD: It was a great effort and it brought some credibility to that because I remember one of my experiences in Deer Park, they came out with beef crumbles, this is before seeing labels and when I was director over there, and so rather than use the hamburger meat we started buying beef crumbles. Well, one of the teachers saw that in preparation back in the snack bar where the ladies were making it, and started spreading the rumor that Mrs. Deckert was buying imitation meat and feeding our kids imitation meat. And the same thing happened when vegetable protein products came along and soy products and people began to think that we were cheating the kids and so in the presentation we talked about how much it helped hold the nutrients in and the fat and moisture and that sort of thing. But those were hard steps in school lunch where they had come from scratch, expected scratch, and we began putting other things into it.

SS: And as you said, if we are turning the corner and going back in some ways, it will be just as difficult. The training that's necessary to go back to some scratch cooking will be just as difficult, if not more. Thinking in those terms, both of you have had experience in the era of communicating important, concise information to large numbers of folks. And in little states like Rhode Island, really the director could pick up the telephone and literally call each of the Food Service Directors in the state and talk about something that's new. But in the state of Texas we had about eleven hundred school districts, some of them very small and some of them very large. What problems and solutions did the two of you see in your careers in communicating information that was vital to the operation of the program in a precise, clear manner to so many people?

CC: Well, we talked about that a little earlier and I think having the experience that we have had in the small schools and realizing, as we said earlier, that you have different levels of education and different levels of comprehension and you got to, I guess newspapers are written on a sixth grade level, so you've got to write it where everybody will understand it and you've got to take the regulation and get it interpreted so that they can understand it, then you've got to find some ways to communicate. Now

our area consultants spent a lot of time and effort meeting with little groups as you all well know, and then I did, every opportunity to the Texas School Food Association, any time we had workshops, we would present. And I always presented to business managers, superintendents at our mid-winter conference in Austin. And we spent a lot of time and effort in communicating, and you have to communicate on the lowest level. You know, if you are making a presentation, you don't have to impress people [with] how smart you are. You have to communicate with them. And that's what we tried to do. And then of course we had the Chuck Wagon, the monthly newsletter that we sent to all the schools and that helped a great deal. And then [in] our workshops we would always go over our regulations, particularly if it was a new one. We spent a lot of time and effort trying to communicate the regulations but they were just complex. My goodness, since I have retired seventeen years ago they have gotten more complex [and] I know that it must be a very difficult job now.

PD: Well it is, and we have found that in workshops very often. And even yesterday people said, "Well, in that other class they told me this and I heard this from the people that were in this other class," and so it is still hard to communicate all of that. One of the great things that we had with

you is that twice a year, at least, and sometimes in between at those other meetings we would get together but we always went to Austin, had those staff meetings sometimes in matchbox rooms and sometimes in nice rooms like this. But where eight of us sat down with Mr. Cole and went over anything new until everybody understood it and was on the same page [because] we were supposed to communicate it to our people in the way that it came from the state office. In addition to that you would always have people that would call the state office and say, "Miss So and So told me this and is that true?" and would ask for interpretations so we probably took a lot of the questions but its still hard to communicate with that many of people, but that was one of the best things for keeping everybody on the same page I think.

SS: Well of course in Texas we only had eight people in the field and I really think that we did a fine job in communicating in those days. Perhaps it was easier with fewer people because we tried very hard to speak in a uniform voice and that was priority for you. The other thing is, I think, was that we did the Chuck Wagon Roundup that only addressed compliance and there were not pages and pages of other materials. There was simply compliance and superintendents had a tendency to read that as well as

directors had a tendency to read that (Stops the Tape)... Charles, you were one of a kind and you were very cautious about spending taxpayer dollars and I doubt there ever was or will be again at the state level program administrator who returned so much money to the federal government each year. Pat and I take pride in having worked for you under that philosophy. I am not sure if I am asking you how you did it or why you did it, but could you give us a little insight into that philosophy.

CC: Well, I guess the reason is that we felt like that we had as many people as we needed to do to do the job. You know, how many people do you need to do something like that. You know, I guess that you could get five thousand and they could be in every school and not just the school district everyday, so you have to decide how much time and effort you are going to take away from the schools by checking them as compared to how much time and effort you leave for them to put the lunch on the tables for the boys and girls. I have an idea before we did reviews, they got nervous and they started shaping up things and probably let some things go in the lunch program that they needed to do. So what we tried to do was to meet the requirements of USDA, meet the minimum requirements of review. We also had workshops and training programs, we had meetings and we felt

like we did the job that we needed to do. And I never felt like that I needed a big staff to do the job if a small staff could do it. This SAE money, for example, I remember when it came about. Now we had some states, you could make a good case; you could make a good case that the federal government should provide some money to the states to help run the program. You could also make a good case if the federal government has said, "Say look, we are going to put hundreds of millions of dollars into this program for boys and girls and we want the states to provide the administration." And that would have been a good case. But you can go to Congress with the lobbyist that we had and say, "Hey, we just need a small percent of that." But that small percent got real big and they sent us enough money to hire hundreds of people and we just didn't need it and I just didn't like to be wasteful so consequently we didn't use it. Now we have some states, or had some back in those days that they felt like if they had federal money that it was effectively free money. You know the further the tax dollars come from home the easier it is to spend. For example, cities when they are leveling taxes upon their citizens, it is harder to spend that money than it is a federal grant. The further away from home you get the money the easier it is to spend. So this federal money

was easier to spend because you didn't have to go to your legislature to get it appropriated because you already had it. And then of course, back in those days we had some states that if they had more staff, they could show their bosses what a big job they had, and then naturally that would move up in the bureaucracy, they could even maybe move up from a director to an assistant commissioner or something, not that we have any states that would want to do that of course. But anyway, that would be one way to hire everybody you can, use it all, and you could show what a big job you had because of all the people that you've got working for you, so he must have an important job because look at the people that I have working for me. And the bottom line [is that] he may have really not have done anything to make that lunch more nutritious or better for the boy or girl, he may have not done anything for that. So anyway, we had some states that [were] very sparsely settled states, the Dakotas for example, that probably needed more money than they got if you are going to give them anything to start with. I imagine [that] if you look at the percent of SAE money based on, (asking Ms. Sadler), "Do you know if it is still based on..."

SS: Participation?

CC: Yes, participation. If you had ever figured up what we would ever get from the Houston School District, you could probably have a consultant in their school all day, everyday, which you would not need. And so the SAE money certainly came in handy for a lot of states but we always felt like that we would use the money we needed and let the other money go back.

SS: And you operated the program mostly on the second, prior year's monies.

CC: Yes, that was the way it was operated.

SS: So you kept it as long as you could and then you sent the remainder back and then other states were given that money to do what they needed to do.

CC: There was some way that the states could get any unused money or something to that effect and there were always some that wanted it.

SS: Well, I do know that some of the smaller states would take the Texas newsletter, for example, and put their own header on it and send it out because it was compliance based and they had no one to write a newsletter and so there were some states that...

CC: There are some states that their legislature would not appropriate sufficient money to run the program like it should and they needed money,

they needed some more SAE and there are some of the larger states in my mind that got more than they needed.

SS: There is one question that I forgot to ask and that's with regard to breakfast. The breakfast program was put into place when, in the 1970s?

CC: You know there is an interesting little story on that breakfast program in Texas. I think that the breakfast program was probably the best program that we had, to have an effect on learning. Having been an elementary school principal, I knew full well that in the morning the students had reading and numbers, reading and arithmetic in the morning. They tried to catch the students while they were fresh. So in all of our schools, and most elementary schools, the reading, since it is so critical, they would have reading in the morning and usually arithmetic in the morning. So if those students had not had a good breakfast, they simply did not have the fuel in their system to be attentive and to do well. So I have always thought that the breakfast program was a good program. I remember one time in east Austin we got there about 6:30 or 7:00 one morning; Hector Holiday was the Food Service Director in Houston, and seeing how hungry those little girls and boys were at that time in the morning that ate that breakfast, and they were hungry. To see them having a nutritious breakfast and I knew

full well that it was not going to be long before they were going to have their reading program and I knew that it had to be very helpful. And then of course, you know Texas was the first state to my knowledge that mandated the School Breakfast Program. That's an interesting little side story. I got a call one day from one of the Senator's office and said that they wanted to send a staff member and draft some legislation mandating the School Breakfast Program. So I said, "Well ok, send them over." You know, I could not imagine the Texas legislature mandating a federal program [because they] never had in the schools. So anyway, we drafted the legislation. The legislation, at that time we put twenty percent, if you were eligible for twenty percent or more of free and reduced priced meals it was mandated that you operate the School Breakfast Program. Well it passed the Senate; it went over to the House; and the story is that one of the House members wanted to kill the bill so he amended it to change from twenty percent to ten percent. So anyway, the House passed the ten percent and low and behold the Senate concurred with the ten percent and so it came out as ten percent. And we were really one of the first states that mandated the School Breakfast Program. In fact, when Nixon went out and Carter came in, well Ford and Carter, a group of bureaucrats

completely changed the different philosophies. The Carter people were very pleased with Texas because we had mandated the School Breakfast Program.

PD: I remember really well the day that that happened. I think that we were either on the last day of the regular session and some Representative from Dallas tacked that on to a bill in the House, isn't that the way that it was?

CC: Well the lady that really stated it was Eddie Bernice Johnson and she is now a Congress lady from Dallas and she was a State Senator then and it was her staff member that came over.

PD: And she tacked it on to the bill. We were not knowing whether it was going to pass or not. And I remember being in the lobby of the Shamrock Hilton Hotel in Houston for a conference and you saw me there and told me that that had passed the night before and that was big news for the conference that we had a mandated program in Texas.

SS: And how did local districts react to that?

PD: Well, some of them were happy and some of them were not.

CC: You know I don't recall...we were easy in administering it in a sense.

We eased into it and there really was no punitive action attached to the bill.

There wasn't anything that said, "If you don't do it..." The only punitive action was in our Division of School of Accreditation. When you have an accreditation visit, to meet accreditation standards you should be in compliance to all state laws. So the way that we did enforce it was through accreditation. Most of our schools had it.

PD: And some of them that did were not over ten percent and did not have to have it and had it anyway. Because like me, I was in an affluent district down where Shell Oil was paying the taxes, that was prior to this, and some of the teachers said, "You know, our kids are so sluggish in the morning. They are quarreling and they are not happy and could we feed them breakfast?" And I remember going to the superintendent and asking him if I could do a little pilot program over at Carpenter Elementary on breakfast. And I did that from April until the end of school and the teachers were so happy with that. They came to me and said, "Our children are lasting to lunchtime and they are attentive," there were so many things. That was a very unstructured study, it was very unsophisticated but I had attention spans and all of that [and] plate waste, I had done studies on all of that. And so, unfortunately the board being in that affluent district still had the philosophy that those things should be done at home and that we should

not provide those breakfasts. So at the open of the next school year we were not able to open it because my school district was not mandated to have it but after I left there because the program came in after that they did adopt the program. There were other districts that only did it in the schools that they were mandated. It was by a school-by-school basis. If there were ten percent or more of free and reduced in the school they had to have it. I remember a large school district on the outskirts of Houston now that only mandated it as they came up to ten percent.

SS: And in fact, weren't there schools that went on and off the program as that percentage changed?

PD: Yeah there were.

SS: Because if it were only ten percent free and reduced, it is labor and really some of those programs were not using it.

PD: But the good news is today that almost everybody is on it and also they like it and they realize the value of it and even principals. You know, you used to go to those mid-winter lunch meetings and talk to them about the learning and that and some of them were not open to having the program. It was the logistics that bothered a lot of people. The business managers used to worry about getting the buses there and what were they going to

do with the kids in discipline and the ones that didn't eat and that kind of thing. But you know it's just like everything else that comes along, you learn how to manage it and then it is not as bad as you think. So there have just been so many good benefits to the School Breakfast Program.

SS: Pat, you have been in the program longer than Charles and I, and you continue to remain active doing consulting work and such. What keeps you going in this program?

PD: Well I guess that we will have to qualify that now that we know all of the experience that Mr. Cole had in school lunch. And he used to tell me this, "You know, the reason I know this is because I read the lunch program when I was principal," but I didn't know the great detail. But so maybe we have been in it about the same time. But, oh dear, what was the question?

SS: What keeps you going?

PD: What keeps me going?

CC: A little senior moment there wasn't it? [Laughter]

PD: "It was!" [Laughter] Anyhow, I love these people and I love what they do. My thing when I came in to school lunch was that I saw some people who were not appreciated in school districts. They did not feel appreciated. They may have been appreciated but they did not feel that way. They felt

that they were on the bottom of the totem pole and some people still feel that. But I've always wanted to help build self-esteem in people. So that was one of the things that early on was important to me to have people feel good about themselves and what they were doing. And then the children, oh my goodness, you go to those schools and you see those little kids and see those bright shining faces and you know I go into schools now and those tiny little kids and they are so cute and you know they are every national origin under the sun and they're just precious. Of course, when I go to the high schools I wonder what happened to them between then and here. But it is the ladies who want to learn. I mean I still do consulting out for districts and financial management and that kind of thing but in the workshops that keep me involved, I don't know; I guess it's just in my blood. Maybe that was from that transfusion that my mother gave me way back when I was six years old, I don't know. But I loved those school lunch ladies. Everybody in Cedar Bayou, we had a reunion. We had a reunion for all of the people who ever went to Cedar Bayou High School last April and the persons that they all talked about, there were a hundred of us there, the people they talked about were the ladies in the cafeteria. They talked about them so much, [including] my mother and Mrs. Goings and so many

other people. So it's those people and their desire to learn and I do think that I am a good teacher. And so I just hang in there with them and I do it; they don't pay very much but it's just one of those things that I like to do. And this week I am just really up from having been with those people.

Some of them I knew and have taught throughout the years but a lot of them I don't know. But I saw those ladies, those Hispanic ladies who came and there are a lot of them in the school cafeterias now and they have language difficulties and they sat there in that class and they tried to learn everything that we were teaching them and their friends helped them and I was just glad to be just a little bit of a part of that and that's it.

SS: That's every nice. The two of you, do either or the both of you have any memorable stories that you would like to share about times in school food service?

CC: Well, there are some things that happened that are interesting I suppose. I was fortunate in that I had a pretty good understanding of the political side of the program. I represented our region as the State Director that represented the region that met with other State Directors. And then I was on the national advisory council for a term or two and met in Washington with the Washington feds. I remember an initiative that the

feds had to consolidate the programs into one state agency. Now there are some state agencies, the state education agency, in many states that have the School Lunch, Breakfast, and Commodities Program. Of course, our philosophy in Texas was that we are in the educational institution and we administer to educational schools. And we do not handle commodities and we do not handle warehouse and we simply do not do the Commodity Program. Well, for years the regional office here tried to get me as State Director to take the Commodity Program. Well of course Wayne Kirkendall did not want to give it up so we were in agreement there, I didn't want it and he didn't want to give it up. (Laughter) Anyway, I said, "No, we just don't want it." But they had a federal initiative to do that one time to try to consolidate them. So I saw the commissioner, deputy commissioner in the hall one day and he said, "Say, come by the office, I got a letter that I want to talk to you about." So he had received a letter from the regional office to set up a meeting with him and his counterpart in the Department of Human Resources to talk about moving the Commodity Program over to the Texas Education Agency. They had made an end run around me. So he said, "What in the world is that?" And I told him and he said, "Well, take care of that, handle that." So then his secretary asked me, "Well, you want

me to call them and just cancel the meeting?” I said, “No don’t cancel it, just call them and tell them that the meeting time and place is satisfactory.”

So I had to be in the regional office a few days later and the meeting was about ten days away and so I made a point to go by Russ Wilson’s office because Russ was the one who was the Deputy Commissioner (that office right over there). And I made it a point to go by and just see Russ socially, we were on a deer lease together, and just chat with him because I wanted to see if he would say anything about it and if he had I was going to tell him not to even come into the meeting. But he didn’t say a word so I said, “Ok.” So anyway, when the meeting time came it was ten o’clock right across the street from our office and I just went in exactly ten o’clock. And when I came in I said, “Well the deputy commissioner asked me to represent him,” and Russ said, “Well, this meeting isn’t going to take long,” so we didn’t even talk about it, we didn’t even talk about the subject we just chatted for a while and left. So anyway, I thought that would be the end to that, of them trying to get the Texas Education Agency to take the Commodity Program but about a year or two later we had a initiative in Texas. Our state constitution is very complex and so they had a constitutional convention in a way of the House incentive to try to revise it

some. And I got a call one Friday afternoon from a friend of mine who was in legislature saying, "Say, what're these feds doing over here influencing what we are trying to do in the Texas Constitution?" He was on a committee and they had come over, Russ had come over and they were still trying to get something changed and that kind of disturbed me a little that he would do that and keep doing that. So I called here and said, "I'll tell you what, said you send word to them..." I believe that Nixon was in office then and the Watergate thing was going, I said, "Just ask them what it would be like if the Dallas Morning News investigative reporter would report that the Nixon Administration or whatever administration it was, is trying to influence the Texas rights on their constitution. Well anyway, Monday morning early Mr. Garber, he was the head-man, do you remember him? (Asking Mrs. Dillard)

PD: Yes, Martin Garber.

CC: He called me Monday morning about eight o'clock and said, "Well Charles, how are you doing?" Just small talk you know, and he said, "Oh by the way Charles, I have talked to Russ about this and don't do anything, let's not do anything more about that." I said, "Well ok, but then they will be wanting to talk about Texas Education Agency wanting to do the

Commodity Program,” and he said, “Yeah, yeah, ok.” We never heard anything again. So I would not have been surprised if school lunch child nutrition had have been either moved over to the Texas Department of Human Services that administers the Commodity Program and the summer feeding program, I guess they still do.

PD: Every once in a while they do.

CC: I would not have been surprised had those changes come about or those being moved over but I was surprised when I heard that the school lunch child nutrition had been moved over to the Agricultural Department. I suppose the school transportation consultants have not been moved over to the Texas Highway Department (laughter) and I suppose that the Driver Education consultants have not been moved over to the Department of Public Safety (laughter), what about the history consultants over to the Texas Historical Society.

PD: No, none of that has happened and that it interesting.

CC: Or our school health consultants moved over to the State Health Department.

PD: So far the agency is still intact.

CC: Well, again follow the money; follow the money and the politicians.

PD: Well, an interesting thing that you reminded me of was when you called President Nixon's name. I can't remember for sure; I think that it was in his administration or Kennedy's. Remember the tomato ketchup thing?

CC: Oh yeah, no that was Bush wasn't it? Yeah, anyway I remember that.

PD: You remember the outcry on that. They were going to offer tomato ketchup as a counting vegetable. And people still talk about that. People who were children at the time were like "tomato ketchup is a vegetable with the school lunch?"

CC: The ironic thing is that the food service people for years have said, "look like we could count a little of that since it is made from tomato and since we have a problem on hamburger day meeting the fruit and vegetable requirement. Look like we could count a little something and then when they decided to, it turned against them.

PD: Well I think of a story and it is about compliance. It was at one of these staff meetings that we had and I think that I was relatively young in the business at that time. There was a time when I was the youngest member on the staff, and we talked about how we did those reviews and everything. I know Mr. Cole was sitting through those two days of meetings or three

days of what it was like, “Oh my goodness will they never quite talking?”

But anyhow, we were talking about how we conducted reviews. And I said, “Well, since I go into a school district only every two years I like to go to as many schools as I can,” because they prepared for us and they liked to show off if the compliance is done in a kind and friendly way. And so I would go to as many schools as I could in an day and when they would hear how many schools I went to in a day they would say, “Well you just can’t look at everything.” And I said, “Well yes I can, I am doing a thorough job. You go in the kitchen, you turn around, look,” and you had a saying about that, “How long does it take to look at a hot horseshoe?” That’s about what he said that ended that discussion. (Laughter)

SS: That’s a good story. As we are wrapping this up, any advice that you have for those who are administering programs at the local level, or at the state level, or at the federal level, to make this program solid and easy to administer.

PD: While he is thinking about that can I tell you one more story.

SS: Yes.

PD: It’s about the children, the boys, girls, and compliance monitoring. I loved going into those schools. And I can remember three times that I had

been in schools, went into one school district down in Houston and there was a picture, you know the Stuart picture of George Washington? And I went in there and these kids, of course you have somebody new and strange in the school district and they are looking around at you and they are like, "Who is she, what is she doing here, ma'am are you George Washington?" My gray hair. And then another one later on asked me if I was Barbara Bush. And the one that really got to me was, and not everybody in the nation would know about this, but we have Marvin Zimmer, who is an investigate reporter in the Houston area, that really tracks the bad kitchens and the restaurants, and things like that and I went in and probably this is the last one that I had like that that a child said, "Who is she?" And this other kid said, "I think that's Marvin Zimmer's wife."

SS: I remember sitting down with a child in a cafeteria and he was very polite to me and he sat and talked to me and answered my questions and when I went to get up he said, "Ma'am, I don't mean to be rude, (I had a hair net on), but you really shouldn't wear that wig." (Laughter) From the mouths of babe's. Do you have any more stories for us, either of you?

CC: Well, I don't have a story of how to make this program easy to administer more simply because I just believe that it will never happen

because of the many complex regulation that you have. Also, it would help it the federal administrators understood the more problems that we have in the smaller schools. Do you remember the management reviews that we had? There's a little story on management reviews that might be worth telling. We were having a State Directors meeting somewhere with all the states and the feds introduced the idea of management reviews. They were having some problems with some major school districts in the country and instead of going there to try to fix it they said, "Well, we are going to review all the large school districts in all the states." Well that was quite a change in that here too, for generally the only time a federal person came in, other than an auditor, you invited them in. In other words, the federal office did not say that they were going over to your school district; you would invite them sometimes to go. So some of the State Directors really resented that, the feds were going to come in whether we wanted them to or not. So anyway, I got to thinking about it and I think that they were going to do Houston, San Antonio, maybe Austin and Dallas, and I got back to the office looking at what they were going to do and I thought that, you know, that was an opportunity. They were not going to take any punitive action, they were going to try to be of help and I said that was a chance to

shape up some schools that maybe we had that would need shaping up and it gives a chance for the feds to see what's going on out in the school districts. So I know our regional office contacted me and may have contacted me a little reluctantly to tell me what the schools had wanted to because they thought that I was going to be on the other side but I said, "Well, that's good, but I got a little problem with that." I think that it might have been Hap Pullman. Hap was not all fed. Hap was a good guy and I tell you he could have made a good State Director or a good school administrator, he was a lifesaver, a guy like Hap, in this program. Anyway, I said, "I'll tell you what I want." I said, "I want to do twenty," he said, "Twenty?" I said, "Yeah I want to do twenty schools in Texas." Anyway they said that they were going to have to check and then they said, "Ok." So I think that our regional office probably took some comfort when they got the regional directors together and said that Texas was going to do twenty, so it kind of softened the blow for the other guys. But that is one program that I thought was helpful and, that being management reviews, and we did the twenty districts, and we even had some districts that wanted them done that we couldn't get to.

PD: That was one of my first experiences on staff. I think was doing one of the management reviews.

SS: So that might be a program worthy of another look-see.

CC: Well you know right, it might be good to reinstitute the manage review and to go to all of the major school districts in the country and share ideas. And I can even envision where you would have Food Service Directors from major districts doing reviews of others within the group.

PD: Well, you know, you mentioned small school districts and regulations but regulations are difficult for large school districts. The more cafeterias you have, the more people you got interpreting those and all those things. They have a lot of people to do it, quite a large staff to do it, but with the regulations as they grow and grow and grow, they really are stretched to the limit on doing some of those things. They are begging for relief in Texas right now and I don't know if you hear that in other places that you go, but they really would like to have a simpler program, which gets the job done, feeds the children and meets the nutritional requirements of them toward having happy, healthy children who grow into happy, healthy adults.

SS: And feeding programs that are focused on quality food?

PD: Yes!

SS: That's nutritious and wholesome that children enjoy. Anything else?

CC: We are just about finished?

SS: Yes.

CC: You know the, I might leave this thought. For the last seventeen years I have been out as we said earlier, where the railroad meets the road, and I really believe that we bureaucrats, everyday local, state, and federal should do three things. We should pledge allegiance to the flag because it represents the freedom that we enjoy. We should pledge allegiance to those boys and girls because those are the people we serve. And we should pledge allegiance to the taxpayers because the taxpayers make it possible for us to serve the boys and girls under the freedom of which we live. And I think that every office, this one included, should have three pictures; should have a picture of the flag, should have a picture of boys and girls, and should have a picture of the 1040 tax form so when the bureaucrats meet and decide to spend all of these tax dollars they will see that 1040 up there and they will know where that money is coming from. Now that's my story and I am sticking to it.

SS: And you are sticking to it and it's always been your story! Pat any parting words?

PD: No, just people ask me when I am going to really quit this and I say, "I don't know." I love it and I am just so glad that we have the program for the children of the country and specifically Texas.

SS: Well it has just been a pleasure spending this time with you and I thank the both of you for coming.