

profile

John Ameroso

EXTENSION ASSOCIATE, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I have been working with cooperative extension for twenty-five years. After I graduated from the University of Georgia in 1968, I applied to the Peace Corps and the International Voluntary Services (IVS). Unlike the Peace Corps, whose volunteers were all Americans, the IVS took in volunteers from all over the world. IVS concentrated on agriculture, community development and education. This was the 1960s; the Vietnam War was going on and also the Civil Rights movement. At that period, the moment you were out of college, you looked to the Peace Corps, and so that's what I did to use my agricultural degree for the betterment of others.

I worked in South Vietnam with farmers who had small acreage on which they grew vegetables. They used to break down a hectare into 10 units and would grow so many units of a hectare, one-tenth or two-tenths of vegetable crops, in the dry season for market and during the wet season, floating rice. But then I got involved in the real need for them. They wanted to grow the new varieties of rice that needed irrigation, the floating varieties to grow during the dry season. So I worked with them to form growers' cooperatives so they could buy pumps and stuff like that. Basically, they all operated as family units, so a coop would have five or six guys, but they were all relatives. We got the newer varieties of rice going. With the money, we then developed a farmers' buying cooperative. Most of the projects I currently

work on are similar to the work I did in my days as a volunteer; the approach was the same.

I started with Cornell Cooperative Extension in 1976. Until 1994, we were doing the Urban Gardening Program. We later changed its name to the Urban Horticulture Program. This program had to deal with home horticulture and community gardens. People were getting organized around community gardens to grow food for themselves, not particularly to grow lots of food, and also to have social activities and health activities. But by 1994, we had lost our federal funding for the program so a lot of the people who were working in that program are no longer here. Also I was getting tired of dealing with people's same old garden questions, of coming out to talk to a group of people about gardening where nobody showed up or showed up one hour late. Community gardens were getting to be old hat. It is no big brainer to do a community garden if you have an organized group, and I did not see a role for me in that any more.

I was getting more interested in the movement that was going on with more local food growing, "sustainable agriculture," which then, in a few years, evolved into exactly what I wanted to do, what they call urban agriculture. This is based on what you have in a lot of Third World cities where a good deal of their vegetables and some animal production is done within the city limits. So I got more interested in doing that. Also, a lot of the community gardens were losing people who had been



Profile developed by Isatou Jack and John Ameroso

in these gardens for a long time. A lot of gardens were dying off, and many of these areas were not being utilized. Or maybe you'd have just one or two people working in it. As compared to the seventies and eighties, when a lot of people wanted to get into gardening, there was not that great demand.

I was always looking for opportunities to use some of these abandoned spots with interested people who were also getting into the same mood. Instead of just growing food to give away, they were looking at growing food because people want it. It can be sold, it meets the need of neighborhoods where you don't have produce, and you can earn money. Before, gardening was thought of as just a little pastime. You could grow so much to give to your neighbors. But urban agriculture revolves around intensive use of the land, meaning that you can get a lot out of a small area if done properly, if you build up the soil and things like that. So there was an interest in people growing not to give away but to do something with it, to market it because there was an outlet for the produce. There was a farmers' market around that was looking for other growers, and community organizations that were interested in setting up farmers' markets. This fed in perfectly with what I wanted to do.

A lot of the projects that we are doing now are based upon community groups outside of the city's Council of the Environment that sets up these green markets which have been around for a long time. These were local community groups in lower-income areas that wanted to do something about food accessibility. This meant having farmers' markets, bringing farmers in, growing their own food, and making it available in their area, which is perfect for what I wanted to do. There are a lot of groups I work with outside of the city; I guess you'd call it the fringe, or periurban, areas. I have projects in

Westchester county, Dutchess county, possibly Rockland county this year, and also Staten Island. I guess you can call Staten Island on the fringes of the city, although it's part of the city. We have a large farm out there, couple of acres. It is an old farm from the 1800s owned by the historical society in Staten Island. We will develop a new farm project there that we are going to use as a demonstration site to train the new immigrants involved in the classes we are giving to get them back into farming.

Getting back to how I got more involved in these projects, for example, with the East New York Farms program... This was a long-range project. You use the same philosophy you use when you educate farmers in the Third World. A lot of things take time to develop so you have to have a real sense of patience. Things don't happen instantaneously. You cannot hold together people in a meeting like you'd do in a normal business world and get outcomes and expectations as to what's going to happen the next week, the next year. It just cannot happen. You have to really just work with people for a long period of time, meaning that as an extension person, you have to be out in the field. You've got to be out talking to people, attending other people's meetings, making yourself known, doing workshops for people, always responding to people. You have to respond to everybody, just get yourself out, attend a lot of different things that are revolving around what you are doing, like going to conferences for community gardens, or anything that has to do with growing stuff. This is basically what I've done for the last twenty-five years.

This work wasn't hard, not for me. Remember, I'm using a philosophy I got from working overseas. When you are working with Third World nations, things don't happen just like that. There are other concerns. Everything

goes on at a different pace. To do things takes time, and you have to know that it's going to take time. You approach it the same way here in the city because in a good deal of the city, in this type of a project, you're dealing with a Third World mentality. In some of the lower-income areas, where there are other pressing problems, things will take time to develop. So you keep yourself involved with people, go visiting, keep yourself out there, know what's going on as compared to trying to sit here in the office as an extension person. I could never have developed the Urban Agriculture Program in the office. I couldn't sit here and *write* down we going to do urban agriculture — *this* is what we are going to do; we're going to *invite* these groups over and we are going to *tell* them exactly how they are going to do this. It doesn't work that way. You have got to be able to feed off what people's interests are. And it takes a while to evolve in it.

Now getting back to the example, East New York, that started back in 1996–97. There was a meeting in Brooklyn with an organization called East New York Urban Youth Corps. This was a group that was used to getting big money to develop gardens. They would just plop a garden in an area and tell the people who live there that this is for them and going to do them all some good, instead of doing some grassroots stuff, letting the people develop. They invited a whole bunch of "green" groups out there, me included, and other groups in the city, the Horticulture Society, for example. We thought that they were inviting us for our expertise, but they gave us a song and dance about how they can develop this garden here, and this garden there, and they have \$50,000 for this one, \$70,000 for that one. We are sitting down there looking at each like "Huh?"

But out of that meeting, one of the guys from the Local Development Cor-

poration of East New York (LDCENY) brought up a question about the value to this land, and we came up with this figure. On a square foot of land in the city, if you just threw seeds on the ground, walked away and hoped it rained, you could harvest what's going to be on that square foot of land and sell it for at least \$2. So we have figures of anywhere of \$2 to \$40 per square foot by growing certain crops as the value of the land itself. From there, we started having meetings with players who were there from East New York, like the LDCENY, private institutes, and a couple of other organizations. They had gardens and saw the interest in it and said, "Gee, you can do that and we could put these food farms in place. Maybe we could develop markets." So one or two years went by having meetings talking about this. The grant was put in by one of the organizations to Hitachi, to talk about urban agriculture, set up a market, get jobs for youth; the program got \$200,000. So that meant these organizations could continue on to hire someone to do this stuff. I worked with them on that.

The first year — maybe two years ago — of the market, we got some local growers selling. It was shaky. My role was getting the growers to sell, to try to track the farmer to come to the farmers' market, and also being at the meetings for my expertise on how you present at markets, that kind of thing. So you continue to work slowly with the groups, attending meetings with them, hashing out stuff like changing the site of the market. The Local Development Corporation got half of the city block under their jurisdiction that we could slowly work on to eventually become a permanent market with a structure that would be covered, where people would sell at it and also use it for other activities. My role there is still working with the groups, training the growers like I've been doing now every

Thursday night for the last couple weeks.

In the past, I never let the slow movement of project development discourage me from the project. As time goes by, the players will slowly buy into it once they see the benefit. But in the case of East New York, it was a different story. That project involved a grant to do the project, all collaborators getting a piece of the pie. In our case, we received \$6,600 for educational training, but the other members received much more, in particular to support staff

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involved (except Pratt Institute, which received \$10,000 for consultation and design). One of the partners, East New York Urban Youth Corps (which in reality was a housing organization) was supposed to do all the organizing of the gardens, supervise youth, and assist in market set-up. They were getting the equivalent of a two-thirds horticulturist (who was on their staff), somewhere in the range of \$25,000 for the two-year project. Trouble is, the horticulturist would never come to the meetings. On market days, he would show up late, discouraging everyone. We managed to get him fired, and the organization hired someone else.

In the meantime, the East New York Urban Youth Corps (remember, a housing organization) was negotiating behind our backs to take over the market site land to build a juvenile court house. In effect, they were forcing us — through local politics — to have the market in another location not suited for best sales. They tried to have some other players come there to take access

of the site at the local market using politics. The partners voted them out (not paying the final grant payment to them as the money was in the account of the Local Development Corporation), and hired Aley (my previous summer student intern) to work out of one of the partner's offices, the United Community Center, to run the program. Through local politics pulled by the Local Development Corp, we got site control and as a result, a successful market season in 2000. This whole incident reminded me of Third World type problems, but in the end it worked out. This shows you how all players are necessary to the success of a project, particularly with extension, as our ability and time is very limited.

As for the politics involved in coordinating a lot of different groups, my part is that I have nothing to do with the politics of it. Other people have to take on those other roles that we cannot do anything about. So to get this site in East New York, the Local Development Corporation was at the high politic end since they have to deal with land and money. They were partners in this project and the conduit for the grant. I don't care about the politics of it. If it doesn't work, that's the way it goes. I go on to something else. If it is a problem within the groups themselves, say about this problem or that concern, that's okay; we can deal with that. Maybe it's just issues about who is doing what or where. That's different and that's something we hash out through meetings. But there are certain parts that require something over and above us, and as an extension educator I have nothing to do with it. Let an organization that has people on their board of directors who are all politically connected see the value of a certain program, then let them fight for it.

My role has been to do the training and, basically, the *schmoozing* for many years, to be the uplift person who says, “Yes, this can be done. You can make \$1,000 on that small spot for extra cash money.” Schmoozing means always being out there, not looking at something and asking, is this meeting is going to be important for me and my program, or is this going to be a waste of time. You should not attend to everything, but you should be available for the public. You should always see what’s going on, which also means spending a lot of time on the job. You’re always ready to do more than the regular forty hours a week, plus a lot of weekends, and nighttime. That’s schmoozing: always talking to people, always being there saying, “Yes, you can do this. Look, this is possible here. No, this isn’t possible.” But the only way to do that is to be out there. You can not sit here and try to formulate programs to *do* out there; everything *comes* from out there. That is why when urban agriculture, sustainable agriculture, and now, small scale farming came about around 1995, I was *so* happy. I *needed* something a little different. Like I said, I just couldn’t deal with the garden thing. It was over with. There were other groups of people who could handle that. It was time to go to that next step.

People want food, and also people want organically grown food. In most cases, people want to eat locally. There is renewed interest in produce grown nearby. Also, if you look at produce prices, they have changed a little bit in ten years. Quality-wise, it’s gone down, especially in some of these neighborhoods. If you can get a farmer in there, the quality goes up. You grow it yourself and market it, the quality goes up. People are more quality conscious for the money that they pay for food. So there was this big interest in doing this which was great for me. Otherwise, I

probably wouldn’t be here. I’d either go into landscaping or into private business. Or I’d probably go straight into small-scale farming, a couple of acres. I’d find land somewhere and do a farmers’ market, because I did do that once about fifteen years ago as a hobby. Urban agriculture kept me here. Otherwise, I would have gone nuts.

We started the program that we are doing now, this New Farmers/New Markets program, because there was need for more farmers in some of the farmers’ markets. I worked with the state Ag and Markets and the Greenmarket program. Their need was to extend the farmers’ markets, but they had maxed out the number of farmers who came in. So we decided that maybe we should try and get people to farm. That’s what kept me going. Also, it started gaining attention. In the past five years, we’ve won three different awards, one out of CaRDI [Community and Rural Development Institute] at Cornell for new and innovative programs, another from the Northeast Directors of Cooperative Extension States, and something else. These awards made us visible here and made more reason for me to hang around, as compared to me getting my walking ticket.

As I see the future for urban agriculture in New York City, some of the gardens are being lost, which is fine. Housing is needed, and gardens can move to the periurban areas. We have plenty of land outside the city, and there’s a trend toward farmland protection; all land doesn’t have to be developed. Sure, we are going to be growing in the city as long as there is land available. Some places can become greenhouse businesses on small lots, which means buying a piece of land and developing a greenhouse to do different things. But more often, especially with this training that we’re doing now with the new immigrants, people are going

to be farming outside the city on smaller plots, perhaps a couple of acres, within a 100- to 150-mile range of one of the biggest markets here. An acre if you do real well can gross you \$10,000 in some of the markets.

There is a lot of farmland available, and there are lots of changes in agriculture. Some of the dairy farms have gone out of business and sold out their land. When I studied agriculture, we used to think dairy land was dairy land and couldn’t be anything else. But it could be for other type of crops. Also, I see a lot of people who originated from urban areas starting to farm outside the city with the idea of bringing that stuff into the city to farmers’ markets or other ways of marketing. So it’s a change from farmers who are growing and wholesaling or dealing with other outlets. There will be a trend toward new farmers, too. Most of the smaller farmers will probably be Central Americans, or of other Hispanic backgrounds, who have some farming background. Sure, you’ll always have big farms and families. But then you have new farms established, particularly a number of smaller farms established, and I think those are the ones that are going to be farming.

These changes will surely bring challenges: getting started, which means having access to some of these areas and being able to get a mortgage, getting some upfront money to start, not great amounts because we are not talking big heavy equipments, coordinating those pieces together. You can get a piece of land and get it plowed for \$300 and then go plant it and build up that way. But you’d like to have some of these people get started sooner. We have a lot of immigrants in the city nowadays, and many of them want to get back into farming. How do you get them back into farming before they lose that interest in it? So we work with other organizations like New York State

Ag and Markets, Farm Home Administration, and maybe Soil and Water to get them started.

We've got another program with the Little Sisters of the Assumption in Harlem, which started out of, again, schmoozing and going out to meetings. There is an organization called ROAR, Religious Organizations Along the River, mostly Catholic institutions up and down the Hudson. Like most religions, they own a lot of land. Somehow we got invited to a meeting just to talk about whether there was a potential to farm some of these areas. Compared to a lot of other religious organizations that were selling off their lands just to get money, they were interested in preserving that land back into harmony with nature. We said that outside of keeping the land as a preserve, there was good use of land in farming.

So after our meeting with them, one or two years down the road, the Little Sisters in Harlem put together a program with some of the family life organizations. They said to us, "We deal with all these Mexican ladies, and it would be nice if they could get into community gardens. We have land up in Ulster county where there's a nuns' retirement home, and it would be really nice if they grow crops there, but it's too far for them to go back and forth." Could we do a program making connections? I said, "Yes, we could have them start transplants here using a cold frame in a very small area and then send these plants up to Walden where they could be planted in a small-acre plot." But the question was, who's going to do all this? So they put together a small project, and we got volunteers to work with them in the first year.

Later, they got a grant from their ministries to hire a master gardener in Walden to run the little half-acre plot up there, someone just to keep it going. Fortunately about two years ago,

we ran into an abandoned community garden two blocks from them. So we got site possession of that community garden for the Little Sisters, and we went in right away in June with some summer students and got things going. We put some soil over there, some beds over there, and we were going to grow crops. This was two years ago. When I say "we," it means me, some of my summer students, the Little Sisters had a guy there who could build beds (he was a carpenter) and a couple of other people who do volunteer stuff for Catholic reasons. So we had a group of six ladies, and now they have their own place to grow crops, not just do trans-

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plants that get sent up to Walden. That first year, they grew a lot, and we got them involved in a little marketing program selling stuff in front of a thrift shop run by the organization. They made maybe \$500 that they put aside. We had that money sit there for about a year.

In the second year of the project, which would have been last year (2000), the Little Sisters put together a proposal to the United Fund. My summer intern, Aley, continued with them and wrote the proposal for them. They got \$20,000 to hire someone half-time to work with these ladies. Luckily, we got a young girl in her twenties who speaks Spanish and comes from out west. Since she doesn't have a horticulture background, I trained her in that. Also, I come out other times to see how they are doing, bring them and the group out to Staten Island where we have a farm, to see what's going on. They also grew something up in

Walden, and they would take trips up there because there's money in the budget to use a van to go visit where the other stuff is growing. At the same time, while they're growing here they also use the extra money to buy produce from the Bronx Terminal Market, which is a farmers' wholesale market. So this program leveraged their money to hire somebody to run it because the volunteers couldn't do it anymore. This past year, I didn't need any of my summer people there because they had this other person.

The first year of the program, my presence and my summer people's presence was very important just to get everything going. But then, with paid staff, it's better because I just give directions to that paid person. Now I attend monthly meetings as a partner group, and I started doing some workshops with the ladies again, visit them

when they're in the fields and bring them to Staten Island to look out there. And we look at what their next steps are. Last year, the program actually had to give back \$5,000 to the United Fund, which is terrible. The grant stipulated that any unused portion in a fiscal year has to be returned, but can get granted for next year. The money earmarked for local travel and events for the ladies was overestimated.

But this year we got another grant, and we will be able to hire somebody half-time and expand the program. That means we'll grow more here in the city and continue to do what they are doing up in Walden on the other piece of land. We'll then look at doing a full coop where they can buy from New York State farmers.

Last year I got a similar program going with the MaryKnolls in Westchester County. The MaryKnolls are Brothers and Fathers who do mis-

sonary work overseas. They have a whole bunch of acres in Ossining, and we started the same thing as with the Little Sisters, but on a low budget. They also had connection with Ossining, a town where there are many low-income people who need food. A couple of priests followed it up and plowed an acre of land last year which we planted and grew a ton of stuff. Last fall, we plowed up three more acres, and we put together a proposal as a group — that's me, the MaryKnolls, and another volunteer from Ossining who's interested in doing this. So we put together a proposal for \$6,000 that we were going to submit to the Food Pantry program. But we would have to give them reports so the MaryKnolls said, "We'll just give you the money." So they just put up the \$6,000 to buy stuff that we needed to get things going. We also hired someone part-time to do the physical work because the priests could not do it. Although I had my summer people up there and some volunteers, it's always good to have a hired person responsible to get something done.

I'm involved with a lot of projects, but they all overlap. Most have hired people so I back off, but I still attend meetings to give guidance. They rely on me for the whole technical piece, stuff like what are we going to plant? How is it going to be planted? What are the time frames? Where do we get the stuff? Also, I'm always doing site visits and yelling at people, "Look at what you're doing. You're messing around here." But I do it with a sense of humor. Now that's shmoozing.

How would I describe what I do? I'd throw it back to days working overseas, where you have to have *patience*, *tolerance* or something like that. My role is not in rural development, but you can call it development work. You could call it food accessibility development type work. When you use the word "development," it means a long process. Com-

munity development is a long process. Urban development is a long process. Rural development is a long process. I guess you call what I do food accessibility. We're supporting New York and other local farmers in Connecticut, Long Island, New Jersey, anything that's grown in the Northeast to keep farms going because it's a viable occupation for people and because New York City needs a lot of food.

I don't see myself as organizing. I leave that up to other groups. They do the organizing, and then I come in as a technician — the why's and what's: what can work and can't work. A lot of times I put myself in the role of a cheerleader. I always have an up attitude toward things. There are certain things that you know make it work from the beginning. For example, someone comes up and says, "We have this problem. We have need a greenhouse, and I know we can grow this thing." And I say, "Forget about it. Greenhouse? That's gone twenty, thirty years ago. You want to do a greenhouse, then you've got to put a lot of money in the thing. You're talking big business. You are not going to make a greenhouse that's going to train people to do this. It's too damn cold here. In December, January, February, it's shut down because it is a waste of energy. But there are things you can use, an unheated frame that can bring you lots of cash. You have something set up in March, you can start a lot of transplants and grow them out of there until the end of May. Then everything shuts down because it's too damn hot." There are things you know can work and can not work. Therefore, I call myself a cheerleader.

I hear from people who want to do something about food accessibility issues. It could be a food coop, it could be growing, it could be marketing. Particularly if they start talking about wanting to do farmers' markets, then I

really cheerlead. But I also give them the bad news that if they expect that they are going to have ten or fifteen farmers coming willy-nilly, it just doesn't happen because there are just not that many farmers. Plus, you've got to be able to guarantee the income to the farmers, which is why the WIC program is so great. So I look at that all those issues, and my cheerleader role is to say "Okay, we can do this. But let's do it step by step, a little slower. We can set up a market this year. Let's see how the response is. Then let's work on getting WIC coupons in the area, after which I know you can get a farmer here because of the money."

Even in the sixties and seventies, as an extension agent, your role was to visit farmers; to work with them to improve the production, improve the monies coming in; to take the knowledge from the university out to the farmers. That role hasn't changed. But it's changed a little bit in the sense that I don't think we have to work with big-time farmers because they can find themselves the resources through consultants, or through direct contact with the university. The changes with extension agents are that there other needs out there. And the way you find out about those are still doing what you do: making your farm visits or community organization visits, finding what their needs are, and working with them as far as how to resolve these issues. That could be anything — from the watershed program, how to deal with water pollution from runoff, to anything based around the land and around agricultural issues. But you're approaching it differently. You are not giving individual advice to people anymore; you're working with groups and organizations. You're providing your expertise and background, whether it is organizing or some other things. But you're always out there working with the needs of people, with what they are talking about.

This means that if you are in a situation in a county and you don't know what to do, the county extension association will have certain program areas that you work in. Those program areas can be opened up to you, for example, if they want to have a home horticulture program. Now, a lot of the counties are moving toward what we call agriculture development programs. Some of the counties actually hire what they call agriculture development specialists outside of the Cornell system to get things going again in agriculture, whether it is production or the use of products for canning or something like that.

So the role of an extension person is going out and working in these counties, looking at what those needs are in a long-range fashion. You need a positive attitude when working with whatever the groups and organizations in your particular county need. The last thing I want to hear at a meeting is, "We cannot do this because of this and that." That's negative. I see that in extension all these years... who comes into extension and who leaves extension. It has a lot to do with your personality; you have to be able to tolerate a lot of stuff. You have to have *patience* and also you've got to be able to *like* people, work with people.

I've been a part of the New York State Association of County Agricultural Agents for many, many years. To me, everybody who is in that is neat. We used to get together and have a lot of fun. Unfortunately, we don't get together as much anymore because of the nature of the people who are in it and travel time. They have nice personalities, the type of personalities that like to deal with people, deal with a lot of frustration. You run into a lot of frustration because things don't happen right away. I don't have to deal with the frustration now. I'm oblivious to that kind of thing because I've been

around too long. The frustration could be going somewhere and having people keep at the negatives of why you can't do something. Those are the frustrations, but to me, those are just humps you try to get over. If you're going to be negative, you aren't going to get something done.

If you're in extension for three years, there's a good chance you'll stay five; if you're in for five, you'll probably stay longer. I've done twenty-five. But there are a couple of reasons for ones who come in and leave right away. One is the economic factor; there's more money in other jobs, even in teaching.

You start off with a project and ... you make a billion contacts from that project, which opens up a million other things. ... You can't involve yourself in just one small project and close off everything else. You have to be open to a bunch of stuff because that's how things happen.

The other one is that people are not suited to the position; they don't have that personality. They don't have the drive to go deal with people all the time and that's key: you have got to be able to deal with people all the time. Also, some people like to be in jobs where there is complete direction with noted goals and outcomes. In this job, there aren't those noted goals and outcomes, meaning that you will never be saying to yourself, "This is what am I doing next week," or "I really need something more packaged and formula." Here you don't have that.

Those who don't last in extension need those packaged directions because otherwise they feel out of place. Sometimes they really don't like the lack of

direction in what they are doing. Oh yes, there's a lot of stuff written up in extension about goals. When you evaluate a program, you look at what were the outcomes. You could write up a program saying, "We are going to have a hundred people growing food," so on and so forth. You can write those kinds of goals, but whether or not they happen, you cannot say until after the time. Then you say, "Our goals were we'd have this many farmers, but we did have thirty people" or "The whole thing just fell apart." So you have got to look at the unknown piece, meaning that you could develop a program, write up a program, but whether it's going to happen or not, you don't know.

So you have to have that perseverance about things like that. It may happen or it may not be happen. But I cannot run myself nutty trying to make it happen and doing pretend work about making that happen. You have to be above that and just say, "Well, this thing maybe didn't work," but if you are doing some

other projects, then that's good.

Another reason why some don't last in extension is that they don't really like to be dealing with lots of different things. We do a lot of different things. So those people leave right away and generally seek a job that has one specific role, which is more easily controlled and also better for your well-being, that is, it pays more money. But in this job, you can't focus on one thing. What happens if that one thing screws up? Then where does that leave you? So we deal with a lot of different things and if you're doing the job right, if you're not just making it a job, then good things come about.

In extension, you've got to have that tolerance factor because you run

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up against a lot of obstacles when dealing with different people, organizations, the university, association boards, this and this and that. Basically, you start off with a project and that project will develop and you make a billion contacts from that project, which opens up a million other things. So you have to open your ears and eyes. You can't involve yourself in just one small project and close off everything else. You have to be open to a bunch of stuff because that's how things happen. As a person working in extension, your role is to deal with the public. We are not a Fortune 21 company where my role is to make sure that a one hundred people are farming and so much money is made. It's a little different.

In extension, we always worry about funding. For example, in the urban garden program, we always worried about funding because we are so dependent upon federal funds. Right now, we have some federal funds, but we also have university funds, so finally I don't worry about that anymore. I guess what

I really worry about is the use of time. All of a sudden, you have got to start setting some rules about time. I don't do things on Sundays because in this job you could do things every day of the week. You have got to put a limit on certain things. So what you worry about is your time factor because the job requires more than just running around. It also requires some documentation, office stuff, dealing with the phone, dealing with other things. So if there's anything that I actually worry about, it's the time issue.

Surprises in this work? Dealing with a lot of people really opens up your world. That's a pleasant surprise, especially in the city where you can be alone and only have a small amount of friends. This job opens you up to anybody who's involved in horticulture, plants or agriculture. You have that whole realm of people who know you, you know them, and that is interesting because it opens up all kinds of stuff. A long time ago, it opened up to parties. Nowadays, it just opens up to people.

Your scope of friends just increases even though you cannot spend time with all your friends. But to me, that's great. It's a pleasant surprise.

I've always been involved with people with the same kind of goals and mission in life. I started off as a young volunteer, and I wanted to do this agriculture thing. Here in the city, the groups that you work want to get something done and they have a particular interest in the field. It is the same working with the agriculture agents and state associations all over the state. This is nice because now I can say I know somebody in every county statewide and can call up somebody just like that. Also, it is national because we have a lot of people that we see yearly at national annual meetings. So what's best about extension is that whole world of people that you're opened up to: people who are dealing with the same field that you're dealing with at your grassroots level, and also your professional *compadres* within extension, both statewide and national.