

Duane K Wells- Mendocino County

1. Career before becoming assessor

Just graduated from Oregon State U in Forestry; hired as Timber Appraiser at \$385/mo when Redwood stumpage was \$6/1000; fir \$2.50/1000b.f. Later became chief timber appraiser, then Chief Appraiser.

2. Career milestones-dates.

Ran for assessor in 1978; on ballot with Prop. 13. Retired in 1991.

3. Postscript

Flew light planes for air taxi and forestry fire spotter. Appointed to Forest Advisory Council. Volunteer with Steering Committee for Ukiah schools outdoor education project. 2000/yr went thru program- Taught timber comes from trees, not lumber yard.

4. Relationship with predecessor.

Hired from announcement at placement office at OSU; only job offering in Calif. Was told "job will only last a couple years". Assessor Webb Brown was my mentor. Traveled to Sacto. On timber issues; attributes concept of Timber Yield tax to Webb. SBE staff opposed the idea, but Webb felt there had to be a better way than the 12.5% ad valorem tax that forced owners to cut timber. Feels Webb was sharp as a tack; couldn't put anything over on him.

5. Relationship with successor.

Thought he was good at his job, and were friends outside of work, but had some issues with his style.

6. Why did you run for assessor.

Natural thing to do; next step in process. Webb called Duane and Art Church in to announce his plan to retire early; was willing to support whoever ran. Art didn't want to run; was appointed interim to fill out term.

7. Greatest accomplishments.

Yield tax development, went with Ernie Comali and others to Wash. state to study their process; also implementation of Prop. 13.

8. What could you have done differently.

9. Fondest memories of office.

Changing the Constitution on timber appraising. Actually getting out in the field to appraise timber.

10. Least favorites parts of career.

Personnel problems

11. Relationship with CAA.

Worked his way thru chairs to becoming President in 1990; also for NCAA

12. Remembering "Assessor scandals" of the 60s.

Several counties had problems. Webb ran in 1955 on position of reforming assessments; taxpayer really bellyached when the office got serious about appraising. Feels Tax Assessor reforms were really taxpayer reforms.

13. Pressure and stress of pre- Prop. 13.

Reappraised county on 4 year cycle; after each appraisal year, set up public meetings to discuss values with taxpayers.

- oppose or support Prop.13.

Ran for office opposing Prop. 13; fortunately, his competition also opposed.

- how about Prop. 13 now? Feels the way Prop. 13 has been interpreted and modified by legislature, the law could be ruled unconstitutional.

14. Involved in state or county politics other than Assessor? No

- did you run other county offices while assessor? No

15. What kind of person makes a good county assessor?

A person able to get along; knowing the laws and regulations % of the job.

- Appraisal or RE background requirement for assessor?

Of course. If not the voters will be able to see if the candidate knows what he's talking about.

16. Interesting points not covered by questions.

- send photos with descriptions.

Sent some previously.

See 2001 picture with Webb Brown and Art Church.