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LP2009.013.146

Betty Munson

November 27, 1989

Talk presented to the Custer-Fremont Historical Society

Unidentified speaker: Well, we're happy that you all come out because we think that Betty has something really important to share and this is part of the Custer-Fremont Historical Society, Custer chapter and Betty Munson will be talking on one room schoolhouses and more, right?

BM: Well, actually I'm supposed to talk about the impact the curriculum had on values and I was also supposed to say a few words about the use of the schoolhouses other than for school.

Unidentified speaker: OK, well, we'll let her go ahead and talk about that. She lived through it and we're very happy to have Betty Munson with us tonight.

BM: We have over here pictures of the old one room schools of Custer County and keeping that in mind, especially some of this one, and this one, and I'll start out by with a poem called 'In School-days.' [John Greenleaf Whittier]

"In School-days" by John Greenleaf Whittier

Still sits the school-house by the road,

 A ragged beggar sleeping;

Around it still the sumachs grow,

 And blackberry-vines are creeping.

Within, the master's desk is seen,

 Deep scarred by raps official;

The warping floor, the battered seats,

 The jack-knife's carved initial;

The charcoal frescos on its wall;

 Its door's worn sill, betraying

The feet that, creeping slow to school,

 Went storming out to playing!

Long years ago a winter sun

 Shone over it at setting;

Lit up its western window-panes,

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And low eaves' icy fretting.

It touched the tangled golden curls,
And brown eyes full of grieving,
Of one who still her steps delayed
When all the school were leaving.

For near her stood the little boy
Her childish favor singled:
His cap pulled low upon a face
Where pride and shame were mingled.

Pushing with restless feet the snow
To right and left, he lingered;—
As restlessly her tiny hands
The blue-checked apron fingered.

He saw her lift her eyes; he felt
The soft hand's light caressing,
And heard the tremble of her voice,
As if a fault confessing.

"I'm sorry that I spelt the word:
I hate to go above you,
Because,"—the brown eyes lower fell,—
"Because, you see, I love you!"

Still memory to a gray-haired man
That sweet child-face is showing.
Dear girl! the grasses on her grave
Have forty years been growing!

He lives to learn, in life's hard school,
How few who pass above him
Lament their triumph and his loss,
Like her,—because they love him.

I thought it rather apropos to read that, because the schoolhouses that are still in existence here in this county, many of them are ragged beggars and they should be preserved and Irene and Stan [Francis] are working very hard to do as much as possibly can be done to preserve the school and the heritage we have from those rural schools.

I would love to, before I start on my official topic, review a little bit about Custer County and the rural

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schools. Prior to 1877, this area was part of Fremont County and statehood occurred in 1876 and in 1877, Custer County became a county in its own right. The first public school in what is now Custer County was District 8 of Fremont County under the territorial government. There was a log cabin located four miles southwest of Silver Cliff, which is possibly where the adobe school stands. Maybe that's more than four miles but that's sort of where I placed it. It was taught by a Miss Verdun and I think she was the daughter of a man who was very prominent in educational fields in Colorado during that time.

By 1881, Custer County boasted 20 school districts. No.1 was Rosita and it had 288 students. Rosita was hoping to become the state capital then. There were quite a few people there. Then there was District 12 in Querida with 100 scholars. Ula out here had 55 students. The building is burned. Wetmore had 55 I think or 150. I didn't get the number down there correctly. In 1881, Custer County had 1400 students between 6 and 21 in the county, and 1100 of those 1400 were enrolled in schools. So, the rural schools all had pretty good enrollments.

I'd like to comment a little bit on the living conditions of teachers before 1900 and maybe up through the 1940s, I don't know. One school, it was down the south end of the valley, the teacher had to share the bed with one of the kids in the family and their house was not very solidly built because after a snowstorm, their bed would have as much as two inches of snow on it in the morning. The schools were cold. There's nothing in the world as cold as a country school on Monday morning. Absolutely nothing, until a fire is made. And the teacher has to get there in time to have it warm before the first students get there.

In 1885, I found the records of a District 10 but I have never found a name for District 10. In this record, the teacher was paid \$36 a month. In the 1930s, Froze Creek, which was out on the Custer County Divide, close to the county line, I think they called it maybe, the Focus School. Froze Creek was the general name. They had no water supply at school. Most of the schools didn't have a water supply. I noticed in their records that they paid a local rent of \$10 a year for supplying the school with water. In 1936, at the Willow School, 1946 I mean, which was the last year of existence as a school for Willows, Laura Lane, who was Mila Lou Vickerman's mother, was paid \$1350 per year, which was really an outstanding wage. Willows School District, let's see, their records go back to, I don't remember now, I had 1913 here but then we found records that predate that. I think the first entry was a \$5 donation given in the 1800s by someone to help start the new school. In 1913, the teacher was paid \$65 a month which was really a good salary for 1913. Those are just some ideas.

Now. I did my first eight grades in a country school, the Dry Lake School, out here in Brush Hollow and my first three years of teaching were in country schools. The first year I taught, there was no water supply there either and I had to carry it. No provision was made. I lived about a half mile from the school and I had to carry the water. Talk about water rationing, it was really put into effect.

I am now going to talk a little bit about the impact of the curriculum on values of the time, the era of the Little Red School. In America, that extends from the 1600s to the 1950s when practically all the districts were consolidated. There are a few isolated rural schools, one room schools, in America, but they're very few. There may be 50 in the entire United States and that's giving them a pretty good leeway.

When we pick up the papers, the headlines always feature the wanton disregard of man for his fellow man, the greed of a few at the cost of many. It's exemplified by the savings and loan scandals and the antics of the Wall Street thugs. Then we read of pornography, flag burning, rioting, protests, teenage pregnancies, homicides and other crimes of violence, child abuse and neglect and substance abuse and the list goes on and on.

There's much handwringing and gnashing of teeth and what's wrong with society and why don't the schools teach values. Well, to the rescue, we should 1) shore up the battlements, and apply band aids, and even our great seats of learning such as Yale and Harvard, are acknowledging that society expects more from their graduates than the ability to pull off leveraged buyouts and inside trading. They are considering too, and they have already implemented courses in ethics and values as prerequisites of graduation.

This isn't anything new. Headlines today would have been suitable for the societies of any era of history which we know. America during the rural school era from the 1600s to the late 1940s and early 50s, recognized that society is always on the verge of collapse and it has realized that values can't be taught in a crash course between Christmas break and Easter vacation. Values can't be taught as a separate entity such as spelling, math or grammar. Rather, values, ethics and mores are acquired by osmosis, from the home, the church and in the past, in the school. The little red schoolhouse era acknowledged that fact, that they had a role to play in the establishment of values.

Beginning in the 1960s, emphasis was placed on the individual, on the self, to do your own thing, regardless of the consequences to anyone else, including the core of society, which is the family. There came out of this philosophy the theory that the imparting of values, such as integrity, decency, compassion, chastity, the work ethic, patriotism, love of God and love of fellow man squelched the development of the individual and the schools had no right to quote 'impose values' on anyone. The individual had to be his or her own person.

Well, now we're doing some second guessing, as I mentioned earlier with Harvard and Yale, but that feeling really still prevails because just last week or week before last, I read a letter in the Canon City Record of complaint directed at school because they were implanting values with the kids down there and boy, these parents better be aware and beware. So then, how did society of the rural school era, recognizing a need for an ethos demanding that man live on a plane higher than chaos, impart values and ethics?

Dad, the home and church played important roles but school curriculum was the most important facet in turning out an orderly law-abiding considerate citizenry. We're just going to consider in the curriculum reading, literature and social studies as math, grammar and spelling are skills and while the early schools emphasized them, they don't necessarily impart out ideals. Take reading, the primary function of a reading program is to enable students to have a working mastery of easy reading. This is a highly technical process beginning with the decoding of symbols, and ending with comprehension and the application of what has been read to whatever need the reader has.

Readers used in Custer County from the early 1900s to the demise of the country schools emphasized

citizenship. And not just a passing phase of so-called Americanization. Citizenship was portrayed in these selections to develop a genuine love of the country, a reverence for our pioneer forbears and a respect for law and order and truth. Patriotism was heavily emphasized and readers were rich in patriotic content. The American Book Company, with their Story Hour series, influenced generations of Custer County students. Selections ranged from the punishment of evil in the three pigs, which is in the 1st grade reader, to Cratchett's Christmas contrasting to the mean spirited, selfish, grasping Scrooge with the underpaid, overworked clerk which we find featured in the 7th reader. Patriotism was treated from a simple story of the American Revolution in the 3rd grade reader to Walt Whitman's majestic Captain, My Captain in the 6th or 7th grade reader. Selections throughout all grade levels emphasized values that produced good citizens.

Scott, Forsman was another publishing company that had a great social impact on America. And I am talking about the period from 1900 on because I don't have access to the McGuffey readers which were definitely value producing books, but I'm talking about those in the realm of my own experience and I'll continue now about Scott Forsman.

I've heard many complaints, usually by male educators at reading conventions, blasting the Scott Forsman readers, stating they weren't relevant. During the decade of the 60s and 70s there was a great hue and cry about everything having to be relevant. And nothing of any literary value, that I considered literary value, was considered relevant. So that explains the deletion of historical material, patriotism, the old tales in the readers, good literature in general. Instead, kids were bombarded with material about divorce and the family, sibling rivalry, physical imperfection, self-esteem, etc., material that should have been presented by a counselor on a one-to-one basis as needed by the individual.

Scott Forsman readers, from the 1920s on through the 50s featured Dick and Jane. Dick and Jane appeared on the scene in the late 20s and they were with us about 30=40 years. It's my opinion that Dick and Jane in the rural electrification association changed not only the face of Custer County but the face of rural America, the entire face of rural America. We have Dick and Jane, baby Sally, Spot, Puff to provide the inspiration for the lifestyle, the desirable lifestyle and REA and TBA provided the means. And let's see why.

Well, Dick and Jane were always clean. Their home was always in perfect order. Problems were solved without aggression and male educators just said that that isn't relevant. That isn't the way life is and right readers telling the way life is. Well, your little kids don't like the way life is sometimes. A little child can come in and say I like this schoolroom because there is one thing in my home that's pretty and so we have. Dick and Jane gave the inspiration for personal cleanliness. Personal cleanliness was now more easily attainable because the REA of course provided the electricity to pump the water or heat the water. If Dick and Jane stories, Daddy's car looked like Father's in Dick and Jane. Mom had electric appliances like Mother. So, Tom and Christy had pretty clothes and smelled sweet and clean as they knew Dick and Jane did. Pre ranch style homes replaces tar paper shacks and log cabins in which the rural school students came. So, Dick and Jane and family were the role models of the 30s through the 50s. They were the Cleavers, the Cosby's of that era and though it took three decades for their lifestyle to become relevant, it was a lifestyle aspired to by the children of the Depression and the World War II period.

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We go into literature and literature per se was not a special class but was incorporated in reading and English classes and I would like to comment on this because literary selections reflected the fact that not everyone could go on to high school or college and so there was a broad spectrum of literature, usually from the Great Books. Because people wanted to be exposed to the classics whether they could go on to college or not. Selections in the readers ranged from an episode in Homer's Odyssey in the 3rd grade reader which I might say is requoted almost verbatim from my college book. They expected the kids to really read well at every grade level. Then, we have, as we go through these books here, we have selections from the Great Books, the Bible, Psalms, Joseph's stories. We have Dickens as I previously mentioned. There's Victor Hugo, Jonathan Swift, and then there's Shakespearian works, all of these elementary readers, and I don't have one beyond the 7th grade level.

Mrs. Lou C. Beeman, who was the county superintendent from the late 20s through the 30s prepared a poetry anthology for grade levels 1-8. And she made one for each school and this particular set was part of a government project. She selected the poems and then it was a WPA fund or something which paid, funded the labor, the girls that did the typing and Hectographing. They didn't have a mimeograph. Hectographing of this material could earn some extra money so she passed one out to every school and the students were to copy and memorize all the poems for their own grade levels.

To motivate this, which was a task for some, but for others was a pleasure, the student, upon recitation of the poem had the privilege of tracing a poster and coloring it which was really a treat because there was a dearth of coloring books then. At the end of the year, poems and posters were compiled into a notebook and I still have one of mine. I had one, part of one anyway, from my 5th grade and you could see that I didn't have, never did quite master those pens that dipped into ink. I could handle a fountain pen but I couldn't handle those pen points. But we had to use those. And then the pictures were, well, there's one under the greenwood tree, and it was a good time filler. In later decades then, memorization was frowned upon. Have a student get the meaning of what he's read but forget the memory work, rote work is just a waste of time. Then about 20 years after that, educators decided that kids needed to develop their memory so teachers had to trek off to workshops to learn how to teach the development of memory. And one exercise we were encouraged to put into use was to dictate perfectly meaningless lists of words, then have the children write as many of those words as possible to develop their memories. Usually, you dictated 12 or 15 words and the good ones could memorize, I mean, could remember two or three, I mean, four or five and some of them eventually would get up to nine or ten, but how much more useful to memorize math facts or geography facts or poetry.

You could use it and it served a useful purpose but as the alternate, the enjoyment of poetry is to memorize them. Values in memorizing a poem, I wonder if a young zealot of today would be so anxious to burn the flag if he had memorized the stirring couplets from Marjorie Fitchie and I'm going to read a little bit of that

Up from the meadows which with corn clear the cool September morn,
The clustered spires for Fredrichstown green walls by the hills of Maryland
Round about the orchard's sweep – I can't read 5th grade writing, I better, after all these years

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Apple and peach tree were rooted deep, fairer the garden of the lord to the eyes of the family Streblehord
on that pleasant morn of the early fall when leave arched over the mountain wall
Over the mountain winding down horse and foot into fragrant town
40 flags with their silver stars, 40 flags with their crimson bars,
Flapped in the morning wind.
The sun and moon looked down and saw not one, up rules old Barbara Fritschie then bowed with her
fourscore years of ten
Bravest of all in Fredricktown, she took up the flag that then hauled down
An attic window the staff she sat to show that one heart was loyal yet
Up the street came the rebel treads, Stonewall Jackson riding ahead
Under his slouched hat left and right he glanced
The old flag met his sight
Halt, the dust brown ranks stood fast
Fire, out blazed a rifle blast
It shivered the window pane and crashed
It ripped the banner with and gash
Quick as it fell from the broken staff, Dame Barbra snatched the silken scarf.
She leaned far out from the window sill and shook it forth with a royal will.
Shoot, if you must, this old grey head, but spare your country's flag, she said
A shade of sadness, a blush of shame over the face of the leader came
The nobler nature within him stirred to life at the woman's deed and word
Who touches a hair on yon grey head dies like a dog
March on, he said.

There's more to the poem but, if things of that nature were presented to the kids of today, I think they'd think twice before they burned a flag or do some of the other things that they do.

Now the rural schools, social studies concerned a considerable block of time and was covered at all grade levels. Topics considered were family life, and it goes on down to cultural life, religion which is something you wouldn't dare mention now, participation in community life, all of these on the local, state and federal levels. Considered also were conservation of human and natural resources and music and dance and literature but in the primary grades, topics were developed as units and were usually hands on projects which was sand tables, charts and notebooks and physical activities. Geography was an integral part of the, and it consisted of the physical, political, economic and cultural aspects. Well, in history, Bood and Bagley were published by the MacMillan company beginning in 1917 and revised until 1937, were the predominant force in the formation of American ethics prior to WW2. The first book in American history at the 5th grade level is a synopsis of the philosophy of the whole series and emphasized were the growth of American nationality, the struggle to improve American life, the emphasis placed in America upon individual opportunity, the growth of human and democratic ideals, the possibilities to rise from poverty and humble circumstances to high achievement, the place of America among nations, the work of women, the inventions and industry of determining influences in American life and the spirit of American earnestness which the Americans of each epoch have wrestled with and the problems of their time. To illustrate the details given a topic, one entire chapter is devoted to slavery in this book. There's 29 pages

and Bood and Bagley, hit slavery very hard. Abraham Lincoln would have been very proud of them and this was the text for which I as a 5th grader acquired my concepts of slavery and its impact on human dignity both on the slave and the slave owner. Let's contrast that with the text with which, I as a 5th grade teacher in 1968 taught. I don't recall the publisher but the text was a combination geography and history book. And I can recall verbatim the paragraph about slavery and I quote;

The plantation owners had black people do their work. In return for their work, these people were allowed to live in little cottages behind the plantation owner's home and were given their food and clothing.

That was it! The word slave was not used, slavery was mentioned later as an issue in the Civil War but that was all. There was no explanation of it so what are the implications? What are the values? Well, ignore a situation, welch out on your obligations, don't be responsible for your actions. Does the curriculum have an impact on values? I leave you to mull that over.

Irene wanted me to talk a little bit about the schools being used for purposes other than education and I haven't been able to find any documentation. But I know from my personal experience and participation, or maybe accompanying my parents, that the schools and the East Hills area, some of them were used, well they were used for church meetings. I remember the Salvation Army used to meet sometimes, and also a group known as the Disciples, not the Christian church but they were young men who went out in pairs and preached, and they did not accept salary. They worked for their room and board and when, they had to have another vocation so that if and when they married, they would be able to support a family. They no longer preached after they married.

Then schools were used as precinct sites for the general elections. They were also used for school elections. They were used for social activities. They were used for dances, box socials. Usually these were fundraisers for school needs. And they would have a dance for anything from fuel to library books. They were used as clubhouses, the Brass Mountain Extension club sometimes met at Dry Lake if they didn't meet at someone's home. Querida was used for the Querida Card Club until the building was burned and apparently it was torched by someone. The Silver Cliff school up here which is now an apartment house was used by the Black Slipper Club and the Silver Cliff Club. And then of course, there were the school programs and dances and that's about all I have to say tonight. I could, I would like to say that the state of Colorado, from the statehood until the 50s, till the demise of the country school issued a course of study. And these were followed. Textbooks were selected to fulfill the goals stated in the course of study. And I think it would be really well if the districts would have a course of study or I, some people object to the state doing it. Probably it would be a hard thing to do now but I think they need a curriculum guide. This was actually a curriculum guide and right now, I don't know that they have a formal curriculum guide here and there's lots of comments about it. People used to do, just sort of do their own thing in the schoolroom and it was just anybody's guess what happened. And that's about all I have tonight. Thank you for your patience. Yes?

Q: In Colorado, does the state have a department of education and do they issue books, print books, that?

BM: They have a state department of education but to my knowledge, they do not print books.

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Q; California furnishes all the books and they publish them.

BM; I think there's something to be said for that. However, there's something to be said, too, for having different publishing companies because you get a different slant. You know, every publishing house has its own philosophy and kids are exposed to different ideas that way, and different viewpoints because all material is slanted. There's no two ways about it. And so have a more diverse development, I think.

Q; What do you think caused this shift from personal responsibility, patriotism, slipping over into, you know, everything's ok

BM: Well, part of it is the media, of course, but we bash the media a lot. There's a lot good things to come out of the media too. However, I have a personal grouch against Mr. Rogers Neighborhood. Mr. Rogers indoctrinated a lot of kids I think in the wrong way. I think he said, he was the one that started when they were babies saying that you know, be yourself and don't be intimidated by anybody and that included mom and dad and anybody else that got in their way. I don't have much regard for Mr. Rogers. A lot of people swear by him. Another thing, the counterculture had an awful lot to do with it. And why the counterculture emerged, I don't know. Some people said it was a rebellion against our affluent society we all acquired Dick and Jane status and then the kids decided that wasn't fulfilling so they had to find something that was fulfilling. And let's see, who was the man, in Harvard or Yale, that started people on the LSD route? And he started it out.

Q: [Timothy] Leary?

BM: Yes, that was it. Well, I have one of his essays that you know, you expanded yourself you could, I mean, the drugs extended your mind so that you could experience God more completely than you could without it and I think that having the college professors backing, I think that really led a lot of kids astray. Then of course, one of the teachers that we had here at the Westcliffe school was a retired Navy captain who worked for many, many years in the Pentagon. He was very prominent in WW2. Collier's magazine ran a long article about him and his activities and his leadership in the war in the Pacific. And he was in Asia during, when the Japanese invaded China which I think was in 1937. And before they invaded China, they had them stoned and I remember as a little girl being bewildered by a story in Life magazine where they were trying to eliminate the drug problem there by just lining them up and executing them. And I was talking to my grandmother about it, you know, and she said, well the state didn't have any right to take their lives. And or their country. But Mr. Gardner said that this is a military tactic, we've had it as long as we've had wars, to get a population that you want to conquer stoned before you move in, and he felt that a lot of, well the Chinese were stoned and the Japanese had very little problems you know winning their goals at that time. He felt that at the height of the drug culture here, that it was communist-backed, of course, everything was blamed on the communists then. But it's very possible that it was started by them. Of course, now Columbia, it's their livelihood, I guess, you know, to supply us with drugs. But I think that drugs, the media, and I think a lot of this indoctrination that you are number one, which is all right, but then as I've said, it doesn't who you walk on or hurt, you've got to be yourself, fulfill yourself. The lack of self-discipline, what it does is just foster lack of self-discipline.

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Q – total rebellion

BM – yes, rebellion and of course, every age has had I mean there's a certain amount of rebelliousness in every age. We could read about rebellion with God and his stiff-necked Jews. He was always yelling at them, you know, so rebellion is old too but I don't know, it's certainly a different climate than WW2. WW2 the high school climate then was one of extreme patriotism and they seemed to feel that they had a goal to accomplish but then there's a difference between WW2 and let's say, Korea and Vietnam. We were attacked in WW2 to start with and the Germans with their submarine war brought a declaration of war on themselves and so we felt that we were protecting our homeland and that's very deep instinct in any warm-blooded creature is to protect your territory and so that explains part of the difference in the attitude that we have between the WW2 and the Korean and Vietnam war. But I don't know why we have all the rebelliousness that we have now because these kids are the best clothed, the best fed, they have more material objects than any generation in history has ever had. And I have no idea, unless it's because it was given to them. And that may be the whole answer.

Q – Betty, you're talking about slavery and in 1968 it's just a paragraph. Could you as a teacher elaborate on that?

BM Of yeah. And we did. A lot of teachers didn't but I remember the students in particular, I remember one girl said, 'well I know why they had slaves. It was because they were too lazy to do their own work and they didn't want to pay any wages.' And I thought, for a ten-year-old, that sums it up pretty well. Yes, we had a lot of, you had all the leeway you wanted, but you know for a teacher that really might not have too much background in history or something, you know, she just let it go at that and might not do any research and right now, in this period of our history, this time of our lives, our national life, the Civil War and all that is getting to be pretty remote. In my dad's life, it was still pretty fresh in his mind because he was born in 1890 and so that just, well, in fact, WW2 is farther behind us than the Civil War was for him. So that was pretty important, and another interesting thing about this book. They emphasize the fact that a third or more of the book is devoted to the last 70 years, and the latest revision of this is 1934. So, see where that puts you back you know they emphasize what would that be from the 1870s or beyond. The history book I used of course while I was in the 8th grade stopped before WW2 started because I was out of the 8th grade before 1941. And so, history's really an ongoing thing but as time goes by, probably in the next hundred years, probably none of these things will get more than a page, that we spend pages on, unless you go on to college and become a specialist.

Q: What about teaching with audiovisual devices?

BM: Any audiovisual device is an excellent teaching aid and I especially like videos because of their ease in operation because you don't have to wrestle with the screen and thread the machines and some of the machines are sort of aggressive. They'll bite you back, howsoever, just plain obstinate and won't thread at all so I really like the way the videos operate and, yes, I do think that other than the technical aspect I really think that it's an excellent way to teach. I remember a slide show that Chinese exchange student presented from Taiwan and she had an excellent presentation and I'm sure that the kids remembered everything because it was so well organized and the graphics were so clear and so beautiful that it would

certainly make an impression. I think though that you have to be careful in selecting video material because especially in the entertainment field, because teachers sometimes go into the pop culture thing. I think that has to be monitored pretty much by the administration to see that the video material is of literary value, or historical value, or any value, rather than just entertainment. Because they can abuse it, as they sometimes do. Kids will bring their own tapes and con a teacher into showing, and if you don't preview, you might get into some pretty steamy stuff. But I think that any audiovisual device is great whether it's electronic or a well-done bulletin board. I think it's fine.

Q: In the one room school there, did you have electricity?

BM: No, we didn't have electricity in any of the, well, one time, the first year I taught, we went, our school went over to Ula School and Ann Riggs who was game warden then had a film on wildlife and it was quite a treat for us, but the only school I know of that had electricity was the Ula school.

Q I remember nearly 55 years ago my dad had to take my mom was a school teacher in one room schools, down to the county seat so we could buy a piece of rubber hose about so long and you put a stick like this in the end of it, and that's what they had to use to spank the kids with There was this movement you know where you couldn't swat them with a ruler or something like that. It'd have to be this kind of thing specifically that you would spank the kids with.

BM Not with a ruler.

Q Spanking with that thing but I still remember, it was made out of red hose (unintelligible)

BM OK in the one room school, I don't remember any discipline problem but one year and it was caused by my younger brother and another boy and everything (laughing)

Then there was one other and my mother would, my mother found out about it why that was the end of that. But one other time, there was a serious problem that my mother had to write a note about. She only wrote two notes to school in her whole life because she had been a teacher and she didn't like the idea of writing notes. But there was a boy that was older than my brothers and I and he influenced a boy that had a horse, that rode a horse to school and they would take our lunch pails away from us and then we would try to get them back and they would try to run us down with the horses, with the horse. So that was kind of scary and so when my mom found out about it, why, she wrote a note that had enough clout that put a stop to that. But that wasn't on the school ground or in the school building. It was just on the way home from school. Then she had to write a note up here to the high school because they had, I didn't go to this high school, but they had, they were really into hazing up here and it just, it wasn't eradicated until I came here to teach and it just got so rough and then it consisted of well, everybody had to have his head dunked into the stool which I think was absolutely gross besides could have caused diseases and Miss Kettle, dear Miss Kettle would just laugh and say, 'that's rural Custer county tradition.' (laughing) Then they would take the boys out. I don't think the girls were bothered too much, but the boys always had to be taken to Lake DeWeese and have their britches taken away from them, and made to walk home. Then one time, they took, I don't remember, they ganged up on Bob who was pretty much of a, he could handle himself pretty well, and did, and he was the one that finally put a stop to it that year. But they got his shoes and I don't know what they did with one of them so here he came home, hippity hopping on one foot, you know, with just one shoe and it just distressed my mother so and she really wrote a letter and so the

superintendent called an assembly for the whole school. He said 'I have a letter here and it's just smoking' (laughing)

And he said 'there's a shoe missing and it better be found or I'm going to be out of a job.' And they found it. And it finally resulted in, it was, you know, usually it's traditional for the seniors to haze the newcomers but in this particular year, the juniors were the aggressive ones. Seniors gave them a nice party. Well, finally, they decided they couldn't stand any more and so Bob, they all called, they had a conference, so they decided which ones each boy would be responsible for and they fought about, where Martin and Topes is now, and that was the end of the hazing. But the last year that they had hazing here was when Alma Lange, who just passed away yesterday, when her son, Alma's son was in there and she had an emphasis of what she had to say, that that was the end of it. We didn't have to put up with it anymore. I think it's a terrible thing. I lucked out, when I went to college because they were doing it over there until the year before I went there and they had taken, because it was so cold, they had taken the freshman girls out to the cemetery which is a mile east of town. They went in then, during the night and they had to go as they were. Then they made them walk back. Well, this girl didn't have her bedroom slippers. She was just in her nightie and she got pneumonia and nearly died. And so that was the end of the hazing there. They didn't do it and it's good because the kids just, they don't have any sense, no matter whether they're college seniors or high school seniors, you know.

Q You live with the mob

BM Pardon? Yes, it's mob rule. They are some teachers of the, let's see, these are the pictures of the little rock school here, we'll see all of them. And one thing that's kind of interesting about that little rock school, there's a ledge on the foundation up about this high and it starts out about this wide and then it goes almost all around the building and tapers off and generations of Westcliffe kids would spend their recesses getting up there and walking around that ledge and trying to get clear around you know. Well, it would peter out, then nobody ever got...

Q There was one fella that? interviewed and I can't remember who it was and he claims that he got around there.

Bm Well I'd like to know who it was because I'd like to know who that was because I, well I'm sure there's just been one and it should be a big sign up there.

Overlapping voices

BM Now this is the little Dry Lakes school where I went and I'm in the 8th grade here. The big boy's dead, the teacher's dead, Dry Lake produced a man that, before my time, but he became a very, very brilliant man but he went to MIT and worked on our NASA space program. He later became insane and at the end of his life was very bizarre and very sad. But at least he was very, very intelligent and he started out and did a lot for national security, the space program, what have you, before his mind, his mental condition played out.

Q They say there's a thin line between genius and insanity.

BM Well, in that case, I think that probably it ran in the family. His sister taught at that school and then

she later committed suicide and I think the mother murdered the father and I don't remember, it was a bad situation, and, but anyway, Troy Greydeal was the one that Miss Kettle had here in high school that was the shining light of all of her years of teaching, and she always referred to Troy. She taught physics and chemistry and biology as well as home ec.

Q What was his last name?

BM Greydeal, and so it was very, very sad and when the social worker, when they came back, he was finally placed in the state hospital for a while around, I don't remember, but Ruth Lange had to go to the state hospital and sit in on a staffing and they said there, that they had never ever in all the history of the state hospital dealt with a family that had been up so high intellectually that had fallen so low. And it was really sad, really sad. I can't think of any, if you'd like to look at these, one thing that I thought, I have some of these magazines and one thing that I read last night and it's really a good play. This is in 1952 and it was still alright to give a sacred Christmas play at the school and nobody would come and sue you. This is the Second Christmas. That's a different one but that's when the family went to Egypt. But it's really, it's based on the family's trip to Egypt, you know, the situation leading up to that and it's really dated, it has, they put angels in it, all the things that you need to have a good Christmas play. But there are just as many plays and stories in here with sacred theme as there are the secular. And we emphasize the sacred more in our Christmas programs here till just the last few years. We emphasized that more and no criticism. Later, the magazines started featuring Hannukah as well as Christmas, but now I don't think you can have either one at school. I put these books out so you can see the scope of and what the kids had to read. I'll just read (walking around)

Q Did you have to buy all your own books?

BM In the rural schools, the teachers didn't, the books were all furnished. When I came here to teach, the kids had to buy their own books for oh, maybe, ten or fifteen years, before they finally decided that they, the district would pay for the books. And that was really hard, because you couldn't change books as often as, some of the books became pretty outdated cause the parents didn't want to buy new books, you know.

Q But those look well-worn too

BM These I, they're pretty good condition inside. Where I got most of these out in the hall and the pictures, and so, now this is the book I learned, my Story Hour reader. I don't know if it came from my school but that's the one that we used and vocabularies pretty extensive. We put in a new reader in the 60s that we used that the teachers then really liked and it was the Lippincott series based on? and by the time a kid had the 3rd grade, he had a 5000-word vocabulary which in the old readers you had about 6 or 700 by the time you got to the 5th grade. But when the new teachers came in, they didn't like it because teachers had to work just as hard as the kids did. And you had to work and work and work and when you developed that vocabulary, would take it out of everybody but my, they could read. I was so pleased Lippincott started publishing these. They just published one grade level a year and then they added to. By the time I got to 5th grade, that had had Lippincott all those years, they could read their history, I mean,

their social studies books. And I didn't have to teach vocabulary in the social studies. It was really a pleasure. But the new teachers just raged, ranted about it and we used to say, 'well you have to work at it and you just have to make up your mind when there's some things that's going to be boring for teachers.' And development of vocabulary is one of them, it can be, you know, a little bit. But you know I noticed a man on tv, who was that football player? That had gone through Oklahoma U that didn't have the reading skills? What pro team does he play for now?

Q He was a black man, played for the Redskins

BM Redskins, and he was kicked off the team because of his drug habit. OK he was talking about the fact he was a graduate of Oklahoma U and he never learned to read. And so, he is being tutored now and I was sort of interested to notice that he was in the 2nd grade level and he was using a Lippincott phonics book. And so, you know, you just have to make up your mind that some of these people take more drill and more individual attention and you may be bored out of your tree but that's your job. You have to be bored, so be it. You've got to get those skills across and it might take, I have an idea that he will be reading fluently in three or four years and what a shame, he's missed out on all of that. All these years

Q it's like Memphis State for 10 years, they never had a basketball player who could graduate
They used him, they never really.

BM It's terrible

Q And then they're done with that.

C Well, I think we ought to give Betty a good hand.

Applause

No,