

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Salem Schools Project

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

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HELEN THORP

Interviewed

by

James McNeal

on

October 10, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: HELEN THORP  
INTERVIEWER: James McNeal  
SUBJECT: Teaching Experiences, early years at Salem,  
principals, superintendents, and library  
organizations.  
DATE: October 10, 1975

M: This is an interview with Ms. Helen Thorp for the Youngstown State University's history of Salem schools project by James L. McNeal at 1717 East State, Salem, Ohio on October 10, at 7 p.m. I would like first to ask you how you decided to go in to teaching?

T: Well, when I was growing up, which was a long time ago, that was the thing young ladies did. However, I can remember...I was thinking about that the other day. Why did I teach because there are some other things I enjoy very much. As a child I played teaching school, and my first grade teacher was marvelous. I simply adored her. I think probably she stands out in my memory more than anyone else, any other teacher that I had and probably that was the inspiration.

M: Where were you in school at that time, in first grade?

T: I was in a country school. There were four grades in one room, and four in another room in Ravenna Township which is...That township is all around Ravenna as Perry is around Salem.

M: So, that is where you went to school then?

T: Well, I went there until I was...I went there two years. I skipped the second grade and then by that time Portage County...The Townships in Portage County were building consolidated schools, and they built twenty-three of

them. Each township had a consolidated school, and Ravenna Township that building was built when I entered the fourth grade. It was finished and we had not only eight grade, but also four years of high school. So, I finished there, and it is no more. The Ravenna Township school is now part of the city system. However, we have an alumni association which we keep up, very active one. I attended two years ago, and there must have been 300 people there.

M: Once you made the decision to go into teaching, where and when did you receive your training?

T: I went to Kent State which was not far from my home. Kent and Ravenna are not far apart as you know.

M: What type of training did you receive? What kind of courses did you take, and so forth in the way of preparation?

T: I majored in English, and minored in public school music, and history. I took enough courses so that I could teach in the elementary grades. At the end of my second year at Kent...In fact, I quit at the beginning of the Spring quarter. There was an opening in Charleston Township, and I taught second grade, second and third grades. Then, I went back to Kent summers, and eventually a whole year, and got my degree.

M: That would have been what year?

T: 1931, I got my degree.

M: 1931. How did you get involved with the Salem schools?

T: The reason I wanted to leave where I was was quite personal, which I won't tell you about the reason I wanted to change. It involved my personal life. I went to Western Reserve Library School in the summer of 1941, and in two of my classes was Louise Layman, librarian of Salem high school. We became very good friends.

M: I remember her.

T: When Loren Early became the Principal of the junior high school, Loren had been teaching Sophomore English, Miss Layman told Mr. Kerr that she knew someone that she thought would be good for that spot, and she gave him my name. I didn't know Mr. Kerr and I didn't know...I knew very little about Salem. One night I had charge of a...I don't know what to call it. The Federated Women's Clubs in Ravenna had a big party. It was an afternoon party, and then an evening party. I had charge of the young people's part of it, the dancing, and we had a concession, we sold ice cream. It was on quite a large

estate, and the young people had their part of the party in the log cabin which was behind the big house, or in the orchard. Someone came to me and said, "There is a man out in the lane who wants to see you," and I went out in the lane, and there was a man. He said, "I am E.S. Kerr." I had never seen him in my whole life, of course. I had never heard of him. He offered me the job, and I took it that evening. Previously, Miss Zimmerman who had come down here from Ravenna in mid-year had written me a letter. She said some flattering things that she had said to Mr. Kerr, and she was so glad about what was happening. Of course, I didn't know what the letter meant, but after Mr. Kerr appeared, I understood.

M: He actually came after you then?

T: Yes, well, he did that. He went after teachers he wanted.

M: It doesn't happen that way today.

T: No, it is not like that today. In fact, he took three teachers from Ravenna; Ms. Zimmerman...Well, first Mrs. Strain came. She was Miss Morgan then, and then Miss Zimmerman, and then I came. We knew Miss Scroder who was the school nurse here, and she before that had been in Portage County. She was the school nurse for all of the schools there, and we had known her. So. that really was the beginning.

M: When you say Miss Zimmerman, which Zimmerman is that?

T: That is Ala Zimmerman who was Thena Girls for many years. She is deceased.

M: When I think of Zimmerman, I think of Geneva Zimmerman.

T: Yes.

M: Now you came to Salem, what was your first assignment?

T: Sophomore English, and I guess I really was in a rut because I continued until 1968.

M: You had the same assignment throughout your career?

T: Same assignment which I think isn't good really. I think teachers should try something else, or try some other level.

M: Why do you say that?

T: Well, you get someone else's point of view, and you branch out a bit. You have to make other preparations,

and I think it's just good for your teaching if you have another age level to teach.

M: You think a high school teacher, for example, should serve some time in elementary?

T: Not necessarily that, but a Senior English teacher sometimes should teach freshmen English. Maybe one class. I don't mean to change your whole career, but I think it's good for you to do something else. However, I have taught all the way from second grade to juniors in my time. I taught fourth grade many years. You see, I taught in Ravenna and Kent before I came to Salem.

M: There are teachers that have dual certificates, and you might be meaning something in that area.

T: I have forgotten. I think I had temporary elementary certificates, and I took enough subjects for elementary teaching, and then I went on and got my high school certificate. I have a life certificate which they don't give anymore.

M: I wonder, the first year you taught you had an assignment, sophomore English. Can you recall some of your thoughts and feelings about that first year? The first day you walked into a classroom?

T: I will never forget the first day.

M: Tell me about it.

T: Did I?

M: I said would you tell me about it?

T: Yes, I will tell you. Somehow my teaching experience in Salem, from 1941-1968, is like a closed circle. The first day was delightful, and the last day was delightful because of children. My first day I was lonely. I didn't know...Well, I knew a few teachers, three or four, but I knew very few people, and we had half-day sessions or half-day the first day, and met each class a few minutes. Well, in the afternoon I was walking downtown, and I will name the boy, Tony Hoover, was across the street, and he said, "Hi Miss Thorp, How are you?", and you know it just made my day, my week, and it got me off on a good start. The last day of my teaching the children didn't know that I was going to retire, but Randy Hansly baked me a cake and brought it to class. So, I entered and left on a happy note.

M: Somebody let the word out.

T: No, I believe he just did that. I don't know. I am not

sure.

M: You were in what building at that time for that first assignment?

T: The old high school. Now the junior high school.

M: On North Lanten.

T: My room was 203 in this corner in the Southwest corner. The traffic was terrible, and when we had the windows open, you just couldn't hear a thing. They stopped at that light, and there were many trucks that went by there.

M: That is the room I am in now.

T: Are you. Do you find that it is not noisy?

M: They have changed the building quite a bit. Altered it, and of course, took all the windows out this last year, well last two years. They removed 80% of the windows and bricked up the walls. The building is not the same as it was even in the few years that I have been here.

T: You don't have air-conditioning?

M: No. If they have it, I do not know where it is.

T: Do you not have to have the windows open?

M: It is not in 203.

T: It used to be so hot.

M: I had five windows in that room, and I have two now.

T: Do you still have the wooden floors?

M: Wooden floors.

T: That is a blessing. I thought when I moved to the new building those floors would be so wonderful, but they were so hard on the back. Those wooden floors give, and it is much easier to stand on wooden floors.

M: What did the room look like?

T: Well, I was disappointed in the building and the textbooks when I came. I thought the textbooks were very much out of date, and I think they were, but we did...I was always involved with textbook committees, and we did get some new ones, but they very out of date.

M: Were these grammar or literature?

T: Both. Both were very old. The building to me seemed quite old.

M: In what way would you say the books were out of date?

T: They were just too old to be up-to-date.

M: As far as material in the books?

T: Material. Yes.

M: Physical condition of them?

T: No, not the physical condition. You could always make them due.

M: Did you go through anything equivalent to today's student teaching anywhere or did...?

T: Yes. I did student teaching at Kent State. I taught Junior English for my student teaching.

M: Where was that? Where did you do that?

T: In the Kent State...I have forgotten what they called it. They had a school, a grade school and a high school at the college then. They don't have that anymore, and I taught there.

M: You would have done it there rather than in a school system outside.

T: That is right. That was a school system. Part of the children from Kent went there, and part went to Roosevelt and to the other schools.

M: Then when you worked at Salem your first year, did you have any guidelines to go by at Mr. Kerr or any individual or group provide information to you as to what was expected, or did they just thrust you into the classroom the first year.

T: I was pretty much thrust into it I felt, but in about two years we developed a sort of an English Department, and I was Chairman, about the third year I was here, and I was until I retired. I can't say I was head of the Department because Department heads are paid. I was Chairman of the English Committee all those years, and that in the later years included the junior high school teachers.

M: Did you have Department Heads at the high school?

T: No, because a Department Head is paid. We were just Chairmen of the Department.

M: They didn't have any Department Heads to bypass having to pay...

T: No, I do not know that they have now.

M: I know they do not now. I thought you meant you were bypassed as Department Head to save a few dollars.

T: No, I am just saying I couldn't be called a Department Head, and I could not crack the whip. For instance, Margaret Baker and I, when Mr. Smith came as Superintendent, wrote a course of study; a very complete one for seventh grade through twelfth grade. It covered everything from practical writing to mechanics of writing, grammar, spelling skills...We didn't get into the literature, creative writing, grammar skills. We spent...Margaret and I spent all our vacations that year, many evenings, most of our Saturdays writing this because we were told to write it. If a child...If the teachers had followed it from seventh grade to twelfth grade, then you would know what every child had experienced in English. You see, I doubt that the teachers followed it, and because I was not a Department Head with time to go around and see and that sort of thing, and I couldn't tell them what to do. A Chairman of a Department just can't be exactly boss.

M: Do you think that would be a good idea in the Salem schools?

T: Well, I always thought it would be good, but maybe a school has to be larger, I don't know.

M: We do have a music supervisor, of course, Doc Pardy who is retired now. Dick Howenstein was just given that extra contract, and you are right. He is paid extra, and I wonder why they do it in music.

T: That is why I think it is good because there is duplication, I know that you have to review material. For instance, if it says in here that you teach use of the library in a certain grade and cover certain things, then the next year that teacher should only touch on them and review them and go on to other things that are in the course of study. If you are well organized that will happen, but I found teachers going over the very same things I had drilled on very thoroughly, as though the students had never heard of that before. That happened many times. There is much duplication.

M: When you say you were required to do that or requested

to do that, who made the request?

T: The superintendent.

M: The superintendent. This was done across the board, across the school system?

T: Yes.

M: Or every year a different area?

T: No. We were...When Mr. Smith came, we were in the throws of writing courses of study, and having many, many departmental meetings. It was good. It really...It got you on your toes.

M: Well, you served under two Superintendents?

T: I served under more than two. I served under Mr. Kerr, Mr. Smith, Mr. Wood. Was it one year he was here?

M: Victor Wood.

T: I believe one year, and Mr. Pond. Right?

M: Mr. Pond.

T: Did he follow...I believe he followed Mr. Wood.

M: That would be four altogether.

T: Four, yes.

M: You mentioned Mr. Kerr coming after you near Ravenna to secure you for a position.

T: Yes.

M: Do you recall any other thoughts or incidents with Mr. Kerr? He seemed...His name pops up in all these interviews with people and just talking anywhere about school history. The name Kerr is just automatically mentioned.

T: Well, I taught for him for so many years, you see. Mr. Smith probably came in 1958 or something like that, so I taught from 1941-1958 for Mr. Kerr. He was a fine educator, and he was very well educated too. He had a major in English, and knew many fields. I suppose I feel this way about him because he was interested in the Humanities, and you get Superintendents now and then, you know, who really don't have much feeling for English and languages and those subjects. Sometimes they are so practical, and you need that too, because there are so many children now, and schools are financed from taxes which is a heavy burden for people. So, you have to

have a practical man, too. Mr. Kerr was very...And sympathetic with the subject I was teaching, and he also was sympathetic with teachers. Now, this doesn't happen anymore. I had some serious surgery. In fact, I had three surgeries in a row in 1954 the Spring of 1954. Well when I had...You see, the last one was in June, so I didn't have much time to recover. When I came back to school, he took one class away from me until Thanksgiving. You know, that sort of thing just doesn't happen anymore. People...I don't believe it does. People are more impersonal.

M: More business...

T: About their staff.

M: He was able then to combine the practical business end of running a school with the human personal element.

T: Yes. I am not much of a judge about the practical side of it. I don't know, I think he did. He really was very thoughtful, and I thought he was a very well educated man.

M: Did you ever see him at a general meeting as a speaker or did he ever call meetings?

T: Yes, we have always had meetings, plenty of meetings.

M: What I am getting at is how did he appear in public as a speaker, for example, and did he generate respect from everybody that you remember associating with him?

T: No. I don't think he did. Now, I am just speaking of him as my boss, you see. I suppose every man who is in a position like that has many people who dislike him, too. I am not speaking of him socially or any other way. I am just speaking of him as my boss.

M: Then you served under Mr. Smith.

T: Yes, and he was a live wire. Very dynamic.

M: More so say than Mr. Kerr? Was there is a complete difference in the two personalities?

T: Yes, because Mr. Smith rushed head-long into things. For instance, if he had a dream, if something came to him that he wanted for the schools, he voiced it so everybody heard it. It would...For instance, one time he talked about a swimming pool for the schools. I think money was very short then, and so immediately all of our town goes this rippling of "Mr. Smith is going to build a swimming pool." It was just some brainstorm he had walking down the hall, I believe. He really got

himself in to difficulties.

M: What kinds of difficulties? In the school or community both?

T: In the community, yes.

M: Do you recall those difficulties specifically?

T: I rather not go in to it, you know. It became...

M: Quite a problem?

T: Yes. I mean he eventually...He didn't stay, you know, he left.

M: Then Mr. Wood and Mr. Pond.

T: Mr. Wood, I didn't know at all. That really hurt my ego. I know that when he saw me he didn't know. He knew I was one of his teachers. Mr. Smith, let me tell you something about him. We had a luncheon the first day of school, huge luncheon when Mr. Smith came and Mr. Kerr was leaving. After the luncheon, no just before I walked...Mr. Smith was walking up one side of the tables in the high school cafeteria, and I was walking down the other. I reached my hand across and said, "I am...", and he said, "I know, you are Helen Thorp." He had looked at the annual, and I know he could do that with other people, I am not egotistical enough to think that he knew me, but didn't know others. I think he knew those high school teachers, and other teachers and he could shake their hands and name them. I had never seen him before. "I know who you are," he said, and he named me.

M: So, Mr. Wood then was here only for a short time which...

T: About one or two years.

M: one or two years.

T: No. It was more than one. I don't really...Oh, Mr. Wood. One year, I believe.

M: He lost the personal touch.

T: He was very reserved, and wasn't that type of superintendent. You know, who got acquainted with his teachers.

M: Then Mr. Pond...

T: Maybe he thought that was the way to do it. I am not

being critical.

M: Mr. Pond then came, and you spent your last few years with Mr. Pond who was Superintendent

T: Very friendly. Only about two, I believe. I am not sure. I can't remember. I can look through these books and tell you.

M: You said he was very friendly, other impressions since you have worked with so many different men all really trying to do the same task of keeping the school ball rolling so to speak. It is interesting to just see how they each went about the same task with completely different approach.

T: Yes. The approach is so different.

M: You mentioned Mr. Pond is so friendly. You mentioned...

T: Yes. I got along very well with Mr. Pond. He is not very kind to English Departments, but nevertheless I got

along with him. I mean I liked him. We had a rapport.

M: You say not kind to English Departments, Do you care to expand on it a bit? I am not sure I understand what you mean.

T: Well, here is one thing that has happened to us, and I know it's sometimes a matter of money and great numbers of children and sometimes the fault of teachers. We worked for many years to get the English load down so we could do more writing, and the writing could be corrected because you can really be drained from reading themes. You can check math papers because you are looking for certain things, but when you correct themes you have to weigh sentences, you have to weigh paragraphs, you have to say to yourself, does this say what the person is trying to say, you have to correct mistakes. Of course, you don't do all of those things to all themes, but it is a very draining thing. The recommendation of the National Council of Teachers of English always had been a teaching load of 100. Well, we would have been happy with 125, and we finally got our load down through years of meeting and talking with our Superintendent and pressuring them. We also got our number of teaching periods down. You know, they used to call them free periods, and they really shouldn't be free periods, they should be preparation periods. Well, the English teachers got two. Well, the rest of the teachers didn't like that very well. It was fine if you were the kind of English teacher who used that time to really correct writing because that is the only way a youngster learns to express himself. He learns orally, of course too, but by writing and having it criticized.

You just can't prepare your lessons, and be a person, and keep up on new books, new plays, and what is going on in the world, and just grade themes until 2:00 in the morning every night. So, we thought we had our load down. Well, teachers...I think teachers ruined it because some English teachers spent those so called "free periods" in the teacher's lounge smoking and gossiping and drinking coffee. So you see, you can't blame other teachers for feeling as they did, that it was unfair that English teachers had two periods a day for preparations. It just...It wasn't fair because they misused it. Besides, then the teacher load had to be greater. I can understand the economics of the thing because we came to that peak of the war. Children, you know, the war babies, and there were many, many pupils, and money hard to get, and you can understand why it has to be the way it is. It is like going back to the dark ages now because the load now is tremendous I understand.

M: Your schedule was what then? Let us say the last few years you taught. The last two or three years.

T: Mine was always all right because I still had a great deal to do and not enough time to do it, but I had two periods because I was the Chairman of the Department, and that gave me sometime to see book salesman, to work in the little English room that we had furnished in the library, and to get word to English teachers concerning things we had to do. So, mine wasn't too bad. I was always happy because I have taught...I taught once in a school where I had 200 pupils a day. Some professor at Kent State says that is not possible, that does not happen in Ohio, but it did.

M: I have 180, so I don't know what I would do with another twenty.

T: That is too many. You really do have 180? Well, that is why I say we are back in the dark ages. The teacher load is too great. You could do so much more with 135.

M: Now, do you recall the transfer from the building on North Lincoln, 230 North Lincoln, to the new high school. That must have been a big transition.

T: Yes. We thought that was heaven because the first year we had only 900 students up there. Just tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, and it was lovely. Halls were quiet, and everything was so orderly, and we had all the frills which later had to be done away with because of the population explosion. We had a student lounge, and we could have teas and coffees and that sort of thing in there. I mean the students couldn't...If they had a speaker, they could have sort of a reception in there.

We had a teacher's dinning room that we just loved. We even bought a picture for it, and of course, those are gone now. They are classrooms. They had to be, that we understand. I thought that I was going to be able to hear pupils recite. I had...Sophomores, they are strange creatures. They are not little kids, and they are not grown up quite. They can be very shy, and they speak very low, most of them. I think I have...I know I have a slight hearing loss now, and I had trouble hearing them. It would get so that they would resent being asked to repeat something. You know, you have found that true I am sure. I thought, "The new building, I will be able to hear," but you know with that type of ceiling they have up there just swallowed up the sound. I could not hear any better up there than I could in the old building.

M: Basically, you were glad to see the new facility.

T: It was so clean and so lovely. It was just beautiful. A beautiful library. My room was 139 which was meant to be, now this was another frill, this was one of our dreams when we planned it. It was a room connected with the library by, there was a door into the library, and the thought was that eventually that would become a library recitation room. That is teachers could take groups into that room and have a discussion concerning use of libraries, and then they could go in and visit the library or they could go by two's and three's in to the library and do some research and come back to that room. You see, it isn't practical to have a room that is empty part of the time. That would then have been empty when no one wanted to use it. You see, that would be an ideal situation, to make that a library recitation room, but now the room is dark, there are no windows since it has been remodeled, the library has been shoved out past that room, and I don't know what it was used for, but it was a beautiful room. All of those windows faced the grass, just grass. It was mowed, it was kept mowed very nicely, and sometimes...Well, there was a little chipmunk, I remember, used to come up...The library juttred out from my room and would come up on the window seal of the library. We had many diversions. You know, in an English class you can stop what you are doing and do something else. I remember one day we stopped and wrote about the chipmunk, and many interesting things happened outside that window. I had never had a beautiful view before. In all of my teaching career I had never had a room from which there was a beautiful view, and that was lovely.

M: Say the last year or two then, where did you teach? In what room?

T: I always had the same room, and they had not remodeled

when I quit, so I always had that beautiful view.

M: 139.

T: 139. I was going to tell you about the library, you know, as I said I helped Louise Layman in her planning of the new library, and that was a tremendous job. Moving the books was a tremendous job. Frank Hoopes helped us, by the way, with a little truck. She had read this scheme somewhere and wanted to do it, but the Board of Education wouldn't let her. We wanted to get pupils lined up from the library windows of the old school up to the windows of the new school, a continuous line up the street of pupils, and pass the books up to the new library and have librarians up there to put them on the shelves in their order as they were down at the old building, but they wouldn't let us do it.

M: That is a matter of something in the neighborhood of five blocks.

T: Yes. You would have to use all of the high school students, probably.

M: That was from 3rd to 6th Street, and the library was on the back, on the North side of the building.

T: It probably was very impractical, but wouldn't it have been fun?

M: There is mention of that. Some guy here in the United States wants to have a hand-holding program clear across the whole country at some given instance. That seems a little ridiculous, but maybe not from here to 6th street.

T: That is sillier than our idea.

M: You say you worked as assistant librarian, and was involved in organizing the new library.

T: Yes.

M: What else was involved in that assistantship?

T: Well, I spent two periods in the library. Probably...I do not know whether they still do this or not, but Bemen Ludwig thought ever high school student should be scheduled to spend some time in the library, regular time. So, every student was scheduled two periods in the library. That isn't the thought now, I believe, they think it should be that a student should be allowed to go when he wants to go. Not be required to go at a certain time. I do not know, I thought it worked quite well. They were assigned seats, so you knew everyday

who was coming. Now, if somebody else wanted to come, had an assignment and he had to come to the library, he could get a pass from a study hall and come over and do his research. You had definite people in every period everyday, every week, the same people. We made charts, and they sat in the same seats. Now, the feeling is now that a library should have some freedom, that they should be able to move around, and sit where they want to, and come when they want to.

M: How much of your day or your week was taken up with that assignment?

T: I spent two periods a day in the library.

M: Everyday.

T: Everyday. In charge of that...In charge of that group.

M: That was part of your English assignment, or was that...

T: That was part of my teaching assignment.

M: It wasn't additional.

T: Instead of study halls, I had those two periods.

M: I would like to talk more about the library, but you mentioned Beman Ludwig.

T: Yes.

M: Mr. Ludwig, of course, was principal in Salem for twenty-seven years. A long time.

T: Yes. I taught with him every one of those. Well, I didn't teach when he was principal at junior high school. He and I came to high school the same year. He was the new principal the year I came. Well, he was fair, always fair. Sometimes he was more severe than I liked with the young people, but he was fair, and he was honest. He is honest, and he stood behind his teachers.

M: Mr. Hoopes in an interview earlier this week mentioned that Mr. Ludwig took attendance many times at teacher's meetings.

T: Oh, yes.

M: He let you know definitely that you have been there, and made a point of following up on that. Did you find that there were other strict measures not only with students, but with teachers?

T: Oh, he was a stickler for accuracy. In fact, yes, it

used to grate on my nerves sometimes, but he had so many fine qualities and was that...You know, everybody has something. That might bother you. I'll never forget...About the first year I was there, I think it was the first year, Miss Zimmerman and I were in charge of the Hi-Tri. Now, that is an honorary girls organization of juniors and seniors belong. They have to have "B" averages. We had charge of the Christmas Program, and I put on an elaborate program, and I never worked so hard in my life. I didn't know people, and I wanted a candelabra, and my brother had a greenhouse in Cuyahoga Falls, and I knew they had two tall candelabra that they used for weddings. So, I made a trip to Cuyahoga Falls the night before to get those, and I told Mr. Ludwig how many candles I would need, and it was something like twenty-eight. I had to guess at it, I wasn't quite sure, but I gave him a definite number. I thought, "Well, if he has...If there are two extra that is fine." I suppose there wasn't much money to put on the program, but the first...We were so busy on the stage just before the curtain parted, and he came on stage he said, "I thought you said there were twenty-eight candles." He had counted those candles, and there weren't that many; those candleholders. (LAUGHTER)

M: He took you at your word.

T: Well, I think I had told him two more or something, and that was important to him. That wasn't...I didn't tell him exactly. The fact that I had to account for not knowing how many candles I had wanted really upset me because I had so many things to do and so many participants to take care of, but that is the kind of stickler he was.

M: Basically, would it be correct to say there was a tremendous amount of respect on the part of the staff for Mr. Ludwig?

T: Yes, I would say so, yes.

M: That seems to be the situation I find in talking to people either on tape or off tape.

T: You could count on him, and if you went up the wrong the stairway, you were caught. You had an up and down stairs.

M: Now, was it...While you were in the high school which of course would be again back down on Lincoln Avenue, you mentioned being involved in the development of student council.

T: Well, Mr. Ludwig came to me and said he felt that we should have either an honor society or a student coun-

cil. So, he asked me to do some research. Find out from other teachers in other schools how they felt about these organizations. So, I did, and I brought back all the data, and we concluded that what we needed was a student council and not a national honor society. So, I organized it in 1945, and I continued until 1951. I found in 1951, helping in the library and as Chairman of the English Department, the load was too heavy, so I wrote to Mr. Ludwig that summer and asked him if I could be relieved of Student Council. That is when Mr. Kala-han took over. He was very nice about it. So, I had it for six years.

M: Prior to that time then there was no student organization equivalent to that?

T: No, no.

M: What did the council get involved in those first few years?

T: Well, I can't remember all the things we did, but I can tell you a few of the things that we did. We had students that ate at the building at noon. They brought their lunches, we didn't have a cafeteria. They were bus students, and there was nothing for them to do, and the merchants downtown complained about their coming down to the stores. So, the student council planned lunch periods. We showed movies several days a week, we danced other days, and we had ping-pong. To get our movies to...We didn't have any money, so we saved tax-stamps. Do you remember tax stamps?

M: In grade school.

T: Yes. They were about three times the size of a ten cent stamp, I would say. We had to sort those and count them and package them or tie them in packets of 100, and they wouldn't, people...We would send them to Columbus then, to the state, and they would be redeemed. If they found any that had broken packages in they just disregarded your whole effort, and you didn't get any money. So, you couldn't use rubber bands, you had to actually tie those. That was the most tedious work I have ever known, and those kids counted those stamps until I should think they would always remember it. We counted thousands of tax-stamps to get money to rent movies, new movies.

M: What procedure did you go through with the stamps? Students brought them in and you bundled them.

T: Homerooms brought them in. It seemed to me we had a contest one time to see which homeroom could bring the most. I have a faint recollection of that. We just

kind of attacked in our sleep practically.

M: (LAUGHTER) Once they were bundled then they were sent to the state.

T: Yes, I have forgotten the address. I always mailed them, and one time I had a package so big they, the people at the post office almost didn't take it. They measured it. It was just a little smaller than the collected in your homeroom for anything went through the treasurer, and he didn't make any mistakes. One time he made a mistake of \$.01 from me, and it just broke his heart.

M: The money that did come back was earmarked for student council use?

T: Yes, that is right.

M: That was used throughout the high school for movies and various other projects?

T: Yes. Then some other things we did: We had suggestions boxes in each home room, things students wanted, and they thought that we should do for them, and we tried to take a stand on whatever they suggested. They really didn't use them very much. Then we inaugurated a vocation stay. We invited people from town, businessmen, professional men in the various fields, as many fields as we could cover. Every student in high school signed up for a certain number of those. We had it all organized so that they could attend so many a day. Then these people came, for instance, we would have a doctor, we would have an engineer, we would have a draftsman, we would have farmer, we would have a nurse, and the whole day was spent on vocations. Then at the end of the day we had refreshments for the people who had come, and it was very successful. Now you see counseling takes the place of that, I believe. We didn't have much in the way of counseling then. We had a Dean of Girls and a Dean of Boys, but much of that was disciplinary work, I believe. Now, we have counselors to really take the place of vocation's day. They only had...They students said they wanted more assemblies, so we had talent assemblies, and those were fun. Really, I have seen...Now maybe I'm just a small town person, but I have seen some high school youngsters perform that are funnier than some of the stand-up comedians I see on the Merv Griffins show, and I mean that. They don't go all around Cape Horn to make a joke, and I suppose they're high school students are maybe, I don't know, more natural perhaps is what it is. We really had some, I thought wonderful talent assemblies. Do you want me to tell you some little things about them?

M: Yes, sure.

T: I made them rehearse always, and I said, "Now, don't do anything differently." Now, you know we have come along way so far as saying what we think, and what...Back in those days we were pretty prudish. You know, we were very careful we didn't say anything offensive, and I was scared to death one M.C. I had out. I couldn't trust him. I never knew what he was going to do when he got out there on the stage, and I was continually saying "Now, don't you dare tell any jokes you didn't tell in rehearsal." He behaved quite well. He always had some different gadget whenever he took part. One time he had a flower on his lapel that would light up. He would squeeze the little bulb in his pocket. Let's see, what are some other things that happened. Oh, Lee Anglar who is now...Who now has a dinner theater in Salem, a very successful one.

M: At the memorial building.

T: Was one of the best acts I have ever seen. He did a pantomime one time in a talent assembly of going into a seat in a movie that was way over in a row, and he had to go past all of the people who were sitting there, and it was some of the best pantomime I have seen, and I watch quite a bit of television. Let's see, oh one time we had a senior had a little, I guess you would call it a combo, a little dance orchestra. They had rehearsed and it was very good. In fact, that same boy had a dance orchestra in college down at Dennison. On the day that we had the talent assembly those fellows in that dance band began tossing something around that was pink. It was a feminine article of apparel that they were throwing to each other, a little pink femininity.

M: Oh. (LAUGHTER)

T: We ignored it, we didn't do anything about that. Then another act I recall a group of boys, in fact, the whole class of woodworking boys--Mr. Hagadarn's class--they sang "I Want a Paper Dolly I Can Call My Own," and they practiced down in their class. He let them practice, and the whole class sang all these boys. We always gave prizes. We voted, we went back to our homerooms very fast after the talent assembly and voted on the best act, and that was fun. Then, what else did we do? We usually had a dance. One time we had a Saadey Hawkins dance. We had clean up week quite often during the year. Maybe each semester we would have a clean up week and give a prize to the homeroom that did the best job. Vocation's Day. We would take a stand on what seemed to be going wrong in the school, and we would make an announcement about it. For instance, if there had been poor sportsmanship, we would take a stand on that and

say what we thought, whether it had any affect or not I don't know. Well, I can't remember all the things we did.

M: You were obviously quite active with that student council, and I am curious was that considered also part of your routine assignment or was that a supplemental operation?

T: Well, Mr. Ludwig asked me to do it, yes. At first we met after school, and it was so difficult to get members to stay because students at that time worked after school, most of them worked, so I asked if we could have it on school time, and that was granted. So, we had our meetings on school time.

M: You weren't paid extra for that?

T: I was never paid extra for anything, never.

M: That is interesting today because teachers, if they do something outside the classroom, they want supplemental contract.

T: They are paid. That's all right I guess. I guess it is all right because when you think of Margaret Baker and me working to write the course of study for the English Department from seventh grade through twelfth grade, you have no idea how many hours we spent of our own time.

M: I do because I teach.

T: You teach, and you know.

M: A lot of people wouldn't and...

T: No, they wouldn't understand that. Many of the teachers were very...Oh, they didn't like it because the student council was allowed to meet on school time. I was rather unpopular during that time with the other teachers.

M: Teachers let you know about that.

T: Yes.

M: Now, with your comments concerning your association with students not only in the classroom, but through the student council, through Hi-Tri, thru those more informal associations, I would imagine that you got to know the students a lot better than the teacher who just came in and taught so many classes a day and was out the door and gone. In the years that you were more closely associated with students than some other teachers are or were did you see any changes in the ten or fifteen or

twenty years working with students?

T: Well, I just told you. During the 1960's when the young people in this country were so upset, and I think they were upset because they had no respect for the sense of, for the values that their elders had and were setting. You can understand that, and I think that is why we had that tremendous revolt of young people. So, then they became suspicious of everything. If you were a teacher, you were establishment. I believe that the relationship between pupil and teacher began about the time I retired, it was changing. They were...You weren't friends anymore.

M: Did you find it more difficult to teach, more difficult to get things done that you wanted to get done?

T: It was beginning to be that way, but I did quit at a good time. I mean, it was good when I quit, but I am glad I didn't go on. I'm glad that that was the time for me to quit. Now, it may be different now, I don't know.

M: You retired in what year then?

T: 1968.

M: 1968.

T: Spring of 1968.

M: If you had it all to do over again would you think it would all be worth it looking back at those years in Salem and with all those students?

T: Well, I suppose that is the only...Since I have no children or grandchildren, maybe that's my immortality. Any life that I've touched, and you know you really don't know what you have done because teaching is...Well, when I taught salaries, you never were paid very much, and there aren't many compensations. Just once in awhile someone will come along and say something that sets you up for a whole week. You don't know what you have done. There is no way to measure it, and you can only hope that you really touched some lives in a way that was beneficial.

M: Do have any particular recollections of some of those high points?

T: Oh, some of them are very simple little things, for instance, a boy said to me one time or wrote to me, I've forgotten which...By the way that boy owns a great deal of real estate in California right now. He is a lawyer. He said to me, "You know..." This is what pleases me

when they say "remember when you said...?" You don't remember when you said, you know. He said, "Remember when you said that if you read one Shakespearian play, went through it with a teacher, you might go on and read many more?" He said, "I've read all of them." That pleased me. Somebody else who has really made something of herself, quit when she was a Sophomore, she quit and was married, and I said to her, "Someday you must finish this high school course." She did, and she is almost through Kent State, and there was a write up about her in the paper with a picture. Do you remember when they were writing about people you should know?

M: Yes.

T: She said, "I owe it to Mrs. Thorp." You know, they call you Mrs. Thorp whether you are or not. "I owe it to Mrs. Thorp that I went back and finished my high school." Just little things like that that make you feel as though maybe you did some good. Then of course, it is a good thing you don't know the bad things you said. You say things inadvertently. You don't know how many youngsters you hurt. I don't know how many youngsters I hurt and didn't mean too. You just by being tired and maybe a little sarcastic or something of the sort I guess it is a good thing you don't know.

M: You have certainly, by my estimation, I'm sure by your own, a rich teaching experience.

T: Very rich, very rich.

M: Before we...Right as we finish up, do you have any final comments at all about your part and work in the Salem City School System.

T: Well, I'm just very happy here because now I go downtown, and I speak to everybody because I'm quite sure that that person is someone I had in class, and the ones I have had, especially the older ones, are so very nice to me. They are just lovely, and I don't always remember who they are. I know the face is familiar, but I can't put the name to it, but after they tell me I can see the young face. You know, it is a strange thing, so often I can see that person in his seat where he sat in the room. I must have made mental pictures of my classes. I remember where Nancy sat when she was in my class. I don't quite remember where you sat, but I know where Nancy sat in the room. That is a strange thing isn't it? That you remember...I think you must have been back farther in the room.

M: I don't really remember. Mrs. Thorp.

T: Yes, Mrs. Thorp.

M: I want to thank you very much for a lot of things because I remember sophomore English.

T: That was a long time ago.

M: Thank you also for the most precious item that anyone can give another person; that is their time.

T: I'm very happy to do this.

END OF INTERVIEW