

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Rayen School Project

Teaching Experience at Rayen

O. H. 264

ELEANOR BEERS

Interviewed

by

Mark Connelly

on

November 8, 1974

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: ELEANOR BEERS

INTERVIEWER: Mark Connelly

SUBJECT: Teaching at Rayen School, faculty

DATE: November 8, 1974

C: This is an interview with Miss Eleanor Beers for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project dealing with the Rayen School. It is being done by Mark Connelly at Miss Beer's residence on 240 North Heights, and it is being done on November 8, 1974, at approximately 3:30.

Okay Miss Beers, would you please talk a little bit about your background, your family background, and also your educational background?

B: I was born in Youngstown. My father was a doctor, a general practitioner in town. Incidentally, my oldest brother became a doctor and practiced in Warren for quite a few years. I went to the public schools in town, the Elm Street School, which is no longer in existence, the Rayen High School, actually "The Rayen School." Then I went to college at Wooster for a short time. Since I couldn't have a German major at Wooster, I transferred to the University of Michigan, where I majored in German. I graduated from Michigan in the thick of the Depression of the 1930's. I had wanted to teach, I had a teacher's certificate, but there were no jobs available. There were many, many people on relief at that time, and they needed relief case workers, so almost anyone fresh out of college could become a case worker. I became one and I kept that job for approximately one year. The next year,

there was an opening at Harding Elementary School in the sixth grade. Though I had no elementary training, my training had all been for German teaching in high school, I undertook to teach the sixth grade at Harding. That year was an eye-opener for me.

C: In what way?

B: Oh, I didn't know what to expect of the children. The age, I wasn't too familiar with, eleven-year-olds in the sixth grade. I had something that would be regarded as a great advantage, but in some ways maybe it was a disadvantage. I had a very bright class. I felt that for the first few weeks, that they were ahead of me, in every way. One thing that I will never forget was that I dismissed the class, the school was all on one floor, and I dismissed the class as usual at 3:15 or 3:30. One or two of them went out the window. I was aghast, I stood there and didn't know what to do, people don't do this. I don't know how I handled it the next day, but I think I spent some waking hours trying to figure out what I was going to do with those kids, and see that it didn't happen again. That was my trouble. I was afraid that I wasn't going to have discipline. Everybody said, well until you have discipline you have nothing. Once you have discipline everything else comes. That got straightened out and I got the students to working. The hard thing was to keep them busy all of the time, because they were bright, it was a very bright group. Then it came back to me, via another teacher that, "Oh, that new teacher! She lets them get away with everything, they go in and out the windows." That is one of my memories of my first year of teaching.

I taught there for five years. I never felt really at home with elementary work. Well, I hadn't been trained at it, I hadn't intended to do it. My first love was German, and certainly the high school level. I always thought that it was a good thing to have had that elementary experience, because high school teachers tend to blame all of the deficiencies on the elementary school. Well, if they would teach them to do this, if they would teach them to read, if they teach them this, that, and the other thing, or if they weren't so permissive or whatever in grade school, we wouldn't have all of this trouble. Well, I could see from my own personal experience what the grade teachers were going through, the elementary teachers. I knew that most of them were doing the best they could. It is just very easy to blame the preceding school or teachers for whatever you find wrong when you get the student.

- C: Then when did you go to the Rayen School?
- B: I went in 1940. It was through the retirement of my own German teacher. I had studied with Miss Edna Richards. I had always thought that she was such a wonderful teacher that I became very much interested in German. That continued all of my life. When she retired, I started there as German teacher, along with Miss Bonge, she had some classes and I had the others. I always then had quite a few English classes, because there weren't enough German classes.
- C: Now a couple of points. First of all, you said that you graduated from Michigan in the midst of the Depression.
- B: Right.
- C: How did you go about financing a college education in the Depression? This might seem a little bit off of the subject to you, but it is interesting.
- B: Well, I was fortunate enough that my father was able to get me to college, although we had our difficulties as well as almost everybody else. I was able to continue through college. Then my graduate work I earned myself, through my teaching; I went to summer school. Anyway, I think that all together I have about thirteen years of summer school.
- C: Where was this at?
- B: Well, I took quite a few courses down here at the university, before it was the university, it was the Youngstown College. Then I went to Ohio State in the summers and that was an eleven-week term, that was really the whole summer, from the time school was out for me teaching, until almost Labor Day when we started in the fall. I worked on my Masters degree in English. I switched to English because there weren't many openings in German. I had just a minor in English before and I was having to teach English, even more English than German. I took the German work at Ohio State in the summer, and got my Masters degree in 1939.
- C: Another interesting thing, which I wasn't aware of, is that you were a student of the Rayen School.
- B: Yes, I went to Rayen. Some of my colleagues, of course, as I began to teach, had been my teachers. Another thing that was interesting was that I got quite a few of the students that I had taught in sixth grade over

at Harding. I got them again. I guess it was a happy reunion at another time, but not exactly, for them or me.

C: So, if you don't mind we will talk a little bit about your student days at the Rayen School.

B: All right. But to get back though, you were talking about the summer, do you want to come back to that? Because I did other summer school work.

C: Oh, sure. Okay, fine.

B: Later on, I wanted to take more German work, this is much later. I went up to Middlebury College, in Middlebury, Vermont. It is a Liberal Arts College. It is a good school. In the summer they turn the whole campus over to languages. They have five or six languages going. It is very rigorous. You sign a pledge that you will not use in any form any language, but the language that you are studying, except in a store to purchase something, and you have to there. Among yourselves and all of your life there, there is absolutely no English, everything has to be the foreign language that you are studying. You eat with your professors and so on, besides taking some very demanding courses, but I liked that. I really liked that place, and the atmosphere was very beautiful, and very invigorating and inspiring. I went there several summers and then after that studied for NDVA scholarships in the defense education act. There were offers for teachers. Then I went to the University of Wisconsin one summer, and the following summer I went to Germany for nine weeks under the NDVA Program. Both of those summers were very valuable to me. That is about the story of the summer school.

C: Now do you want to talk a little bit about your school experiences?

B: You mean as a student?

C: Yes, if possible compare, for example, say you talked about the teachers at the Rayen School when you were there as a student, when you started your career as a teacher and when you finished your career as a teacher. Could you draw a comparison and contrast?

B: When I was a student, Rayen had a very outstanding faculty. They are not equally outstanding, that is never so in a school, I believe, but they had many very fine teachers.

- C: What years were these?
- B: 1926 through 1929. For example, well, I thought that my German teacher was outstanding, Miss Richards. The French teacher, Miss Marion Thomas, was noted throughout the state. She was a very fine teacher. There were some excellent Latin teachers, and incidentally, there were at one time at least four, maybe five, full-time Latin teachers at Rayen. That was when I was going to school there. Latin fell off to the point where there is one part-time Latin teacher now, and he has a couple of classes. That is kind of an indication of change.
- C: What was the attitude of the students toward Latin when you were there?
- B: Well, you had to take it to get to college. See, to get into college you had to take it. There were many students that really liked it very much. I preferred German, I liked the modern language. You still get the argument that Latin is more valuable than the modern language, and this is still a topic of controversy. I think that Latin is valuable. I hate to see it die out. Modern languages are dying out now as far as that goes, I hope not dying out, but they are falling off.
- C: Yes, we were talking about the faculty.
- B: Well, I got under Latin, you want names?
- C: Sure.
- B: Miss Marie Sieger was a very fine Latin teacher, and very strict, demanding, very good. There was Miss Katherine Smith. When I was in high school, two of the best I knew of the Rayen teachers, very fine teachers, were nearing retirement, Miss Vida Baldwin in mathematics, and Miss Sarah Jean Peterson. Those are very familiar names to older people around Youngstown.
- C: What was your opinion of those two teachers?
- B: Well, I didn't have either one in class. I was scared to death of Miss Peterson for no good reason. It was that you were just supposed to be. Miss Baldwin, I didn't know, but I knew other faculty members who had such a tremendous admiration for her that I came to share it. I realized she was certainly a superior

person and a very fine teacher. She was demanding, but from all that I have ever heard, very fair. The problems the kids did, those two, who got up an algebra book for advanced algebra, college algebra they called it I think, that was just fantastic, the difficulty of the problems that they had. They were demanding, but very fine characters and fine teachers.

C: Well, how did this compare with, say, the teachers at Rayen in 1940, when you got there?

B: Well, 1940, several of my own teachers were still there. Of course, there were new ones, standards were still very high. As standards changed, in a school like Rayen it takes a long, long time. All through the 1940's, and I guess on into the 1950's, there were students coming in and paying tuition. They were coming in from the suburbs, from Liberty, Liberty township, and even other suburbs to attend Rayen. You had to pay tuition to go there. Then it was a shock to me to find the reversal there was for a while, some Rayen students were paying to go out of there.

C: When did you notice this?

B: I couldn't say exactly, ten, maybe fifteen years ago. I may be wrong on that time. It was a shock to me to see that they didn't pay to come to Rayen anymore. Some of them were paying to get out of Rayen because of the changes that had been taking place.

C: What sort of changes did you notice?

B: Well, we had fewer students in the college preparatory group. Those were the people that were likely to want their children to get such a foundation that they could get into a good college. That was one reason, the non-college preparatory kept growing as the college preparatory classes decreased. Then, I hate to get into it, but it is certainly present, the racial problem was there. I saw a great change the day after Martin Luther King was assassinated.

C: In what way?

B: There was a great change. The black people were excited, very much excited and incensed. The first that I was aware of anything going on was during lunch period, lunch period of that day. I heard this loud noise that I never heard before in school. It was just a surging noise and I thought, "What's that?" I walked out of my class, we always did. We were just trained to do that. If there was anything unusual going on, go to your door, and step out and see what is happening,

because the teachers in the hall help control situations. This mob of black students was heading up the hall. This had started down in the cafeteria. They were finishing their lunch and they started down in the cafeteria, and they came serging the hall, right toward me. I thought, "What am I going to do?" I didn't know what is up here. There was screaming and yelling. Well, I got the crust to stay there. I didn't want to run away, and I was curious anyway, I wanted to see what they were going to do. As they got up toward me, I could see that they were laughing. They weren't acting especially angry. Instead of heading down into my corridor they went up the ramp, which was in front of me. This took them up to the second floor. They all turned and went up the ramp. Well, nothing much happened that day, really, in school. This was unusual, this mob action, something starting in the cafeteria. I think something was said. Someone incited the students, they were already tense and ready for anything because of the atmosphere, from the assassination. They marched through the halls. I think that most of them were sort of just having a good time really. There wasn't anything to be alarmed about. However, parents began hearing all kinds of rumors about the horrible things that were going on at Rayen School that afternoon, that white children were being attacked, and just everything imaginable was supposed to be going on that afternoon. Some parents came up. The comment of one mother was, "I came up to see for myself after all I heard." I said that, "Well, you can see, this was during the day, you can see that there is nothing, we are just having classes as usual." After school there was more mob business out in the Yard and in the street, and some attempt to rock one of the teacher's cars was made. There were police around. They were all worried then. As a result of that, many students left the college preparatory school, because a lot of those rumors I think stuck. You know, you heard it and those awful things did happen. I know they did not happen. My German department had been growing up to that point, but from then on, it fell with a bang. I just dated it from that day.

- C: Did you ever notice any sort of racial disturbances before this period, before, say, the assassination of Martin Luther King?
- B: It is hard for me to tell just when things happen. It came out in the open more. There was hostility, and there still is hostility from among many of the black students. That is one of the things that bothered me so much. I wanted them to learn. Any teacher that is worth his salt wants everybody to learn. It doesn't matter color, background, anything about them, you want

them to learn. They had a feeling I think that if you are white, you hate them. They must hate you back, and hate you first. You had this hostility that is very difficult to cope with.

C: Would you say that there is almost an actual resistance to learning?

B: Right. Definitely a resistance to learning.

C: Were there many blacks attending Rayen when you were there in school?

B: Not many, there were quite a few. I couldn't say what the percentage might have been. There weren't very many attending. When I went to school, I think they had to; education was compulsory through high school, I think. I am not sure when that came in.

C: There were what you would consider lower class blacks that went to school when you were going?

B: Yes. Poor usually, usually poor. I had classes with them and I thought it was very good for a person to associate with a variety of different kinds of people.

C: Now in the 1940's did you notice anything, any hostility? I mean resistance?

B: There was resistance, but what made the hostility come out into the open, was like in numbers. See, when you get a preponderance of a group, they get into their confidence, which they didn't have when they were such a minority.

C: Now obviously, a lot of white students left. What affect did the preponderance of black students have on the white students that remained? Did you notice any change?

B: Not too much. I don't think there was too much there. Once in a while there would be some little trouble, of a very minor sort between the blacks and whites.

C: What about the administration? How did they handle the black problem, as it became a black problem?

B: I think very well. I think they, like it is hard for me to say just how they handled it, but certainly every effort was made to show that every student had an equal chance. There was not any favoritism. I really couldn't comment definitely on saying how they handled it.

- C: What about the attitude of teachers as a whole? Were they getting a little bit disgusted, or what was their reaction?
- B: The teachers as a whole just want people who want to learn, and if there are people that resist learning, it makes them unhappy. That is about all I can say on that.
- C: Well, did you notice a turnover of teachers, a quicker turnover of teachers during the 1950's and 1960's, than say you did during the 1930's?
- B: I believe so, yes. I think there were more. Another change that made a difference was, when I started to teach, married women weren't allowed to teach. If a young lady got married, she automatically left the profession. Now they keep on, and that makes a difference, but they may go somewhere else.
- C: Was that a written rule, or was that just an accepted rule? We haven't been able to track this down.
- B: It was local. It must have been written. It was just that any woman that married was automatically out, the next year. I don't remember just how it was, whether it was from that minute on. The idea was, I think it was because of the Depression or, well, it was in effect before that, that they had a husband to support them and they shouldn't take the jobs from the single people coming on who needed it to support themselves. It was a form of discrimination, of course. You get married and you can't have a job anymore.
- C: Was there any resentment among the women about this rule?
- B: I think there was some. I don't think that it was very strong. They did think that it was foolish. There was more resentment before my time. I think that it was back in the 1920's when women were paid less than men. There was a very fine teacher over at South High School, Miss Fry, Miss Jean Fry. She wrote an article about this. I think that it was put in the Vindicator, about equal pay for equal work and so on. She wrote it so well. I think that it may have been influential in changing that ruling, about less pay for women.
- C: By the time that you got there was it equal?
- B: By my time, yes, it was equal. Also, there had been

different salary scales in the past for elementary and high school teachers, where high school teachers got more than elementary teachers. That was changed, I don't know when. It is hard for me to pinpoint what decade these changes came in. That was a form of discrimination too. Then elementary teachers are worth less than a high school teacher.

C: What was your starting salary?

B: \$1,215 a year. You would be surprised what I could do with that. I went to summer school and everything on that little bit of money.

C: Where did you live when you taught?

B: On Madison Avenue, across from Number 7 fire station, where the Sparkle parking lot is now, on the corner of Madison and Elm. The house is torn down now.

C: You lived with your family?

B: My family, yes. Then my father died in 1933 so I lived there with my mother.

C: What was your salary when you retired? I am trying to get a range of increase, what can you remember?

B: Oh, I think that it was \$13,200. I had the super maximum because of two Masters Degrees. I had the regular salary scale.

C: Could we go back in session to your student days? Let's talk a little bit about the student body. Would you have considered it a close-knit student body when you were there?

B: Very much so. In my early teaching days too. Lots of school spirit, very great pride in the school, "The Rayen School." They were proud of the traditions of the school.

C: Did you go to the football games?

B: Sure. Thanksgiving game, Rayen, South, that was the big deal. We would freeze out there in the stadium.

C: What sort of extra-curricular activities did they have there, when you were there as a student?

- B: They had a few clubs. We had a history club, that was very popular. It was open to everybody. Then the language clubs, limited to advanced students in whichever language was involved. Glee Club, they had the Camp Fire Girls, and we had, I don't remember if we had scout troops or not. They had some illegal fraternities and sororities. Oh, we must have had more than that now.
- C: What sort of support did these various activities receive?
- B: Well, very good support. These activities were considered "the" thing to belong to. Oh, they had Hi-Y, that was strong for the boys. Y-Teens, which was a corresponding YWCA group, very strong. They were important organizations.
- C: What about dances, did they have many dances, school sponsored?
- B: No, we didn't have dances. The only time they danced, I think, was at the Senior Banquet. Not anything that was actually school sponsored, as I remember.
- C: Who was the principal there when you were attending as a student?
- B: Edmund F. Miller
- C: What was your opinion of Mr. Miller?
- B: He was strict, but I never tangled with him. I admired him as a good principal. He ran a very good school, top ship, as they call it. Yet, he had a human side.
- C: In what way was that?
- B: Well, I remember when one time I was called out of class, and it was in German class. I immediately went down and I was sent to the office. I went there and I was ushered into Mr. Miller's office. There was another student there, a girl. He sat there with a twinkle in his eye and let me be scared for a while. I didn't know what to think. He said, "How would you like to take a trip?" I said, "Well, it depends." He had called me up to say that a couple of girls from the journalism class were to go up to Western Reserve, something that they were having for high school journalism students. He wanted to know if I wanted to go. Of course, that was fine. I went. I will never forget

that little interview with him and how scared I was to be sent to the office. Nowadays, I don't think that it bothers most of them at all.

C: In the 1920's there was sort of a what you would call a power struggle going on between the board of education and the board of trustees as far as control. Did you notice anything?

B: I really don't remember. In the 1920's I was a student, I wouldn't have been aware probably, of this trouble.

C: I think an interesting thing would be a comparison or a contrast between the day you graduated from Rayen as a student, and the day you retired from Rayen as a teacher. What were your emotions on these two days?

B: Well, the day I graduated was a day of celebration and I was very proud to be a graduate, you know, big stuff. Our class was about 250, I think. The day I retired, I was a little surprised to find that I didn't have much emotional reaction. I think the emotional hump was over, when I decided that this was going to be my last year. I had lived with that so long, you know, for several months, and by the time I actually retired that was over then, almost entirely. I didn't find it a traumatic experience at all.

C: Did you have any regrets, about leaving?

B: Not really. I had some other responsibilities that, home responsibilities, that I could devote myself to, and less to worry about. Teaching had become quite frustrating. It was a lot harder to get the kids to work and accomplish anything. I can't say that I didn't have any regrets. Every once in a while I think now, well, here is something that I would like to share with my advanced German class, or my English class, that would appreciate some literary point that I would like to bring out. I imagine myself standing up there talking it over in front of the kids or talking to them about it. In general, I just feel that it was the time to quit and I did. Another thing that maybe doesn't bother some, but as you get older, you have like an inner feeling that these kids, you know that they think that you are an awful lot older than you feel that you are. This age gap enters into the picture. Some of the kids, there is this lack of respect. They will say things to a teacher nowadays,

that we would have been permanently expelled for saying. You just didn't do that. I mean that there was a lot greater authority when I was in school, and my early teaching days. I had things said to me that would have barred Rayen School to a student for the rest of his days.

C: What sort of things?

B: Obscenities, profanity, anything that comes to their mind. No holes barred in class, out of class.

C: Would you report these to the administration?

B: I did, until I found that it didn't make any difference.

C: They had no reason for not taking action?

B: No, it had just become so common throughout the school system. It is still going on now. Some of these older teachers that you have interviewed wouldn't mention that because it wasn't happening when they were teaching.

C: Again, I hate to try to force you to pinpoint something, but could you give an approximation about when you noticed this?

B: I'd say maybe it became noticeable in say about the last five years I was teaching. I have been out since 1972. I talk with the teachers and I know that they are still doing it. They say even down in the grades, even in first grade, these little kids are calling teachers obscene names. It has just become so common that nothing is supposed to be done about it.

C: They don't even report this to the parents?

B: I guess not.

C: What sort of tactics did you use to try and arouse interest in the students?

B: Well you try, in English, English is a very hard subject to motivate them in. You try to tell them if you want to get a job, you can use the vocational approach. That the better your English the better your chances are. You try to get them to read so that they will get some appreciation of literature. It has gone to the place where, except in the college preparatory classes, and even was noticeable there, the idea of reading for literary merit was just out. To read only for information, and not even that very much. Reading has fallen off and it is really too bad. I think that it is alarming.

- C: Did you notice your standards coming down through the years?
- B: You had to. If you tried to maintain the standard that you had maintained in the past, you couldn't do it. You just had to give with the times. Although, the German department developed until we finally had four years of German. We had had two years of German for a long time, that was all. Then we were able to add a third year, and then finally a fourth year. Through the four years, four credits of German, standards could be maintained, high standards. I would say right in the beginning of the 1970's or very late in the 1960's, we noticed in the German classes that there wasn't this willingness to work, and very plugged, and do extra things, volunteer to get up a German club program with some of the other kids, less creative, less spirit, with regard to the class work and the club work. What we teachers always called it was watering it down, you had to water it down, make it more palatable to the students.
- C: Do you think Miss Peterson would have taught at Rayen School at say 1960 or 1970, in that period? Do you think that she could have stayed there? Do you think that she would have stayed there?
- B: Miss Peterson and Miss Baldwin were getting concerned that they lowered their standards back in the 1930's. I often have wondered about that. What would those older teachers have done in maintaining the standards that they did maintain when they were there? Whether they would have been willing to lower their demands is what it amounts to, or not, I don't know.

I'll tell you, along with this lowering of standards, there were some other good things. There were some positive factors there. Well, the children were more relaxed. There wasn't this supreme authority here, and here I am a little nobody here. I sit and quake before this person. It is more of a give and take between the students and teachers, which I think is a good thing. It is hard for me to say how that is related to standards, but it is. There is a chance for initiative on the part of the student. I found with the crisis I had in recent years, if you just want a student, or a group of students to come up front, to the front of the room, and maybe each one say a line or something, just to do something a little different, they used to just fall all over themselves to be the one to do it. Then it got so that nobody wanted to do it, and you couldn't get anyone up front. They just wouldn't do it. There is your difference in motivation.

- C: Did you notice a continuance of family minds at school as a teacher?
- B: What do you mean? You get one generation after another? Or brothers and sisters?
- C: Right.
- B: Yes, very definitely.
- C: Did this continue all the way through to, say, the year that you retired?
- B: Right.
- C: That is interesting.
- B: It is. I was talking with a girl the other day who had just been married. I asked her if she had married a Rayen fellow. She said no, that he went to another school. I said that I remember that name. Someone else said, "Well, maybe it's her husband's father, you know." I said that it could have very well have been. I think that it was. It was an odd name. These generations are all represented. Then I got a jolt when I got the first student of a student. I thought, I really am getting old when I have a student of a former student. I mean a son or daughter of a former student.
- C: Another thing that always seems to pop up is dress, dress for school.
- B: Yes, all through the years.
- C: Now when you were a teacher, excuse me, when you were a student, was there any specified dress code that students had to follow?
- B: I think the mothers had more say about that than they do now. They sent their children to school, for the most part, in neat clothes, clean clothes. I still remember Miss Peterson stopping a girl in the hall one day. I wondered what was the matter, because I didn't see that she had been doing anything. What Miss Peterson was concerned about was the girl had a sleeveless dress on. She thought that it was inappropriate for school. There were always fads. Oh, there was the zoot suit fad. Do you know that? Do you remember that?
- C: Well, I have heard of it.
- B: Broad shoulders, and a big chain hanging down here, pointed toes.

- C: How did the school react to the different fads?
- B: Well, we would just try to have the kids dressed up. As an example of dress, when the club pictures were taken, for many years we required that the German club picture show students really dressed up. The boys would wear a jacket and a shirt and tie. The girls would be neatly dressed. You would remind them the day before. I would state tomorrow is the German club picture, everybody have a jacket and tie or you can't be in the picture. If somebody came without one, he would borrow one from somebody. Then it got so that they just weren't going to do that. That was part of their rebellion. What do you have to dress up for? It is not worth making an issue of. They dressed very formally. Then there was the movement for the girls to wear slacks to school. We hadn't allowed slacks ever. Some of them started this business of wearing slacks and they would be sent home. Then finally they were permitted. Then it got to being allowed to wear shorts and mini skirts, and the whole idea of a dress code broke down pretty much. It seemed really that making an issue of that was just asking for trouble. Except I myself think that people act to a certain extent, in accordance to their dress. You get better behavior when people are dressed up, when students are dressed up, than when they are all in dirty blue jeans.
- C: Back again when you were a student, you said that the students, or at least the parents made sure that their children were fairly well dressed. What about the poorer students attending Rayen? Do you think, or did they ever talk about, was it sort of a hardship of dressing properly?
- B: There was some of that, I think that was the reason for parents wanting the boys to be allowed to wear blue jeans. It was so much cheaper than a suit, or even a nice pair of slacks.
- C: This is all the way back in the 1920's?
- B: No. You mean when I was in school?
- C: Yes.
- B: Oh no, they wore suits. I don't remember that anybody was really so very poorly dressed as to be noticeably poorly dressed.
- C: But you say that you wouldn't have even noticed who were the poor in the school?

B: No, they all looked very much alike.

C: There really wasn't a distinction then between the haves and the have-nots, when you were going to school?

B: No, in appearance I don't think so.

C: What about just generally? Did you notice a division at all?

B: Well, the financially better off students had maybe an air of confidence that the others might not have. "I'm in and maybe you aren't." Some of the organizations, the fraternities and sororities, might emphasize that factor. That is the reason they didn't want to have them in high school, the lack of democracy involved. As to class distinctions, they didn't seem very important.

C: Okay, what was your opinion while you were attending Rayen as a student? What was your opinion of say, South High School, or one of the other inner city schools?

B: Well, we just thought that they weren't nearly as good as Rayen. I suppose people of South thought the same thing of us, that we weren't nearly as good as they were. The term "inner city school" was not known then either. I know how you mean to use it.

C: If you had to say one thing that changed, one thing that changed about the Rayen School, now this is both from your experience as a teacher, and from your experience as a student, what one thing would you have changed?

B: Oh, it is hard to pinpoint that. One of the most important things to me is attendance. The falling off of school attendance, the kids don't come to school, and don't have to come to school, they can't be taught. To me, that could almost be the key, the thing to start with.

C: Now this attendance. How do they get away with it? I mean say in the 1930's or 1940's when you were there, and there was greater attendance.

B: There was an officer, there was punishment, you could be suspended for truancy. So many suspensions and then expulsion. I believe that there isn't such a thing as expulsion anymore. Suspension has come to many of the students to be kind of a distinction. It is not feared as it was. Often they thought, well I am suspended, I get three days vacation.

- C: Now from your memory of the 1930's, well the 1920's while you were a student there, and also the 1940's and 1950's, how active were the truant officers?
- B: I think they were very active. I remember one, well they were called, the staff called them truant officers, they called them visiting teachers, some euphemism like that. I remember one who was very zealous. When a famous orchestra came to town, they came to the Palace Theater, on the stage. He would go down there and catch Rayen students watching the show. They would go places where kids could be hanging out, that were truant. Now the attendance has gotten so hard to check, that there just isn't any attempt to do anything like that, to go somewhere and catch a bunch of them and haul them back to school. I don't believe such a thing is possible anymore.
- C: Is there any punishment anymore for them at all?
- B: Well, when I was teaching, it was still the same way, the only thing you could do was to keep them after school and then you would take a fight to get them in, to these after school sessions. That didn't seem very effective.
- C: Again, another comparison and contrast. How well do you think the Rayen School prepared its students for college when you were there, when you were attending as a student, as compared to say when you were teaching in the 1940's and 1950's?
- B: I would say very well both times. Judging by where the students went to school, and on into the 1960's, they were admitted into the very best colleges and universities, and did well regardless of what college or university. There were so many that would write back and come back and say how well prepared they were. I used to say, you can get as good an education that you need at Rayen School. Right now, even the year that I retired, I was saying that. It is available there, for you. You can get all the education that you need, to be well prepared for college.
- C: Do you keep up much with what is going on at Rayen right now? Anymore?
- B: Somewhat. I talk with some of the teachers, and I go back to a few of their social functions, faculty functions. Occasionally someone retires, and they have a party, and I like to see them that way.

- C: Do you belong to the Alumni Association?
- B: I haven't been active in that, it has changed over the years.
- C: Well, that is about it, is there anything you would want to offer?
- B: It sort of bothered me that question about what would you change, what one thing. I came up with attendance, but that was such a big bump with me, because I figured it was so fundamental. The kids have to come to school, and they know that they have to come to school, in order to get anywhere with them at all, because there is continuity to your course. There is no continuity if they are here today and gone tomorrow, and then back.
- C: That attendance would apply more to the present day true?
- B: Oh, yes.
- C: Well, what would you have changed in your student days up at the Rayen School?
- B: Well, I am sure there must have been things that I would have changed.
- C: What complaints usually floated around among the students?
- B: Nothing specific comes to me. I think maybe sometimes we felt that we had to work too hard. That isn't anything that I would have changed.
- C: How much time did you put into studying usually when you were going to high school?
- B: What we actually put in and what you were supposed to put in might not always have been one and the same. They figured you should study 45 minutes for each subject per day. Part of the time you would be in studyhalls, in study periods, and you might have a couple of those per day. That would take care of two subjects. You had four, so about an hour and a half at home would be expected to do it. Now you can't get that kind of study out of the kids. They don't work at all in the studyhall, and you will see them going home in droves without a single book. I think that the teachers feel that they just have to give in while they are there, and not depend on what is being done outside. It is rough to try to teach a subject.

- C: Do you get any sort of sinking feeling, you know, what would be described as sinking feelings or any disheartenment about the whole secondary education?
- B: Yes, you become very much discouraged. One thing that I didn't bring out, we were, many of us were much alarmed with the so-called Progressive Education Movement back in the 1930's. They were trying to put into practice some of John Dewey's educational philosophy. The way it was interpreted was that the child does not learn unless he wants to do what he is doing. You learn by doing, that was the basic to his philosophy. I think it is true, you do learn by doing. The child must want to do what he is asked to do, or he doesn't learn. The way it was interpreted was, "Don't ask me to do anything I don't want to do." That became so ridiculously permissive, the whole education system. I was going through that, especially when I was teaching in the grades over at Harding School. They are going to write a theme, well what do you want to write about? Baseball, that was all those kids were interested in was baseball. If you have to always cater to their interests, all they would have ever learned anything about, in school or out, was baseball.
- C: Was Dewey's method endorsed by the school at all?
- B: It was. You were supposed to be some kind of fuddy-duddy if you didn't go along with it. That was what was being taught in the schools of education at the colleges and universities, was progressive education. Some good did come of it. The good features of it were incorporated in later philosophies. This went on more or less until Sputnik. We woke up. Here we are letting these kids do pretty much what they want to do, making it palatable, sugar coating, everything. Here the Russians have gotten ahead of us, and our national pride was hurt, and our school pride was hurt, and parents wanted to know what was the matter. We did have quite a revolution in our philosophy of teaching.
- C: Did the administration ever take an active role in recommending to you how to go about teaching?
- B: Not too much. One of the nice things I always thought about teaching at Rayen, was that they didn't care really. You enjoyed the right to teach as you wanted to teach. There wasn't much required of you. You could run a class and teach it the way you wanted to. Of course, you would maybe have an interview once in a while, or be interviewed, which is kind of a little conversation with the principal. He might suggest that you do this or that or the other thing, or some kind of experiment, like speed reading, or something that

was an innovation. I would get so tired of doing the same thing all the time that I would have liked some of those innovations. They would wear themselves out. I didn't feel that there was somebody over me ready to pounce on me for teaching a certain thing, or teaching any certain way. We had quite a bit of freedom in many of the classes.

C: When you entered the Rayen School as a freshman, how many students were in your class, approximately, if you can remember?

B: In the school all together, there was a student body of 1800, which was too many. That was because East and Chaney had not been opened yet. We had half day sessions, because the building couldn't accommodate the whole student body at once. My whole freshman year I went in the afternoon only. Others went in the morning only. You had all of your classes, one after the other, during that half day. Then later on it feel off with the opening of the other schools. Then I guess it was the war babies that caused another peak. It got up to 1800 again, but then it would go down to maybe 1200.

C: Would you say that most of the students that entered with you as a freshman actually completed their high school education?

B: It's hard for me to say. It seems to me that they did. At that time, and on into the 1940's anyway, and maybe through the 1950's, more than 50%, maybe 60% or so, I could be quite wrong on this figure, did go on to college. It was a highly college preparatory school. Then that fell off to the point where you are likely to have one college preparatory class per year, where you might have had 10 to 15 college prep English sections. Whether you had that many in one year or not, I don't know. There would be many college preparatory sections. It dwindled down to the place where there would just be one per class, because the school had changed so that it became more vocational. It is really what it is becoming. Another thing that was on the increase was what they call the EMR, educational mentally retarded. Those classes are growing. There are more and more of those classes. There are more classes, other classes, these kids that just couldn't possibly keep up. We thought it was a good thing to put them where there would be smaller classes and specially trained teachers. You do notice that there is an increase in those classes.

- C: Was there any area that I haven't touched upon that you would like to talk about?
- B: No, I can't think of anything offhand. After you are gone I will probably think of 25.
- C: Well, you just call us up and we will come back. One last question then. Now, when I say the Rayen School, what one thing sticks out in your mind the most? Now this can be from your student days, or from your teaching days. What one thing sticks out the most in your mind?
- B: In evaluating the school or what?
- C: When you hear the word "Rayen School," what immediately comes to your mind?
- B: It sounds funny, but past excellence. I hate to say that it's past, but it is. It hurts to see such a change taking place in school.
- C: Anything else?
- B: No, I can't think of anything more.
- C: Okay, thank you very much.
- B: You are very welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW