

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Early Education

Personal Experience

O. H. 1008

EDGAR E. WILMS

Interviewed

by

Caroline Wilms

on

May 6, 1980

EDGAR EDWIN WILMS

Edgar E. Wilms was born January 17, 1914 in Salem, Ohio to John Vet and Caroline Haldi Wims. He was pronounced dead at birth, but was revived to grow up with his twin sister and four brothers. He attended Salem Schools from 1920-1932 when he graduated from Salem High School.

Ed entered the General Academic Program at Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio to prepare for the Flying Squadron in Akron at Goodyear. However, a strike forced the discontinuation of the program before his graduation. He had been advised to prepare for a second field and had chosen education because of his interest in athletics and coaching. His majors, upon graduation from Mount Union in 1936, were Education and Biology with minors in English and French.

Ed began his teaching career in the Penfield School in Lorain County as one of three teachers in a high school of thirty-eight students. He taught science and mathematics and coached in this system for four years before going to Wakeman for a year. He enlisted in the Army in 1941 rather than be drafted during the next school term. His one year service extended to four years, eight months when the United States entered World War II. While he served in the Medics, he completed Officer Candidate School receiving his Commission in 1943. After OCS he was stationed in the Hawaiian Islands and was among the Occupation Forces sent to Japan in 1945. He received his discharge in February 1946.

As a veteran he was guaranteed employment in Wakeman upon his discharge. However, he substituted the remainder of the school year rather than put his replacement out of a job at mid-year. He remained at Wakeman one more year before teaching at Berlin Heights for three years. During 1953 and 1954 he left the classroom to travel throughout Northeastern Ohio as an Educational Counselor for Mount Union College. Also, in 1954 he received his Masters Degree from Western Reserve University. He taught one year in Norwalk before accepting a job in Howland Schools. During his seventeen years in Howland, he introduced the Programmed Math Course that is still being used.

Since his retirement from teaching in 1973, he has enjoyed gardening and raising peach trees. He and his wife, Almeda, reside in Hubbard and have several acres for his horticultural interests.

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INTERVIEWEE: EDGAR E. WILMS

INTERVIEWER: Caroline Wilms Hall

SUBJECT: Student teaching, Army Enlistment, Howland

DATE: May 6, 1980

H: This is an interview with Edgar E. Wilms for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Early Education, by Caroline Hall, on May 6, 1980, at his home, at 6:45 p.m.

Okay Uncle Ed, would you tell us something about your parents?

W: Well, my dad's name was John V. Wilms, my mother was Caroline, there were six living children, I was the fourth one. Paul was the oldest, George and my twin sister Esther was born six hours before I was, and dad told me that I was pronounced dead when I was born. They finally got me to breathe and I made it.

Well, I had a good home life. It was a big struggle during the Depression, but we all, living on a farm, were able to eat well enough to survive.

H: Where was this farm?

W: Salem, Ohio on Beaklor Road, about a mile from the center of town. I attended school, all my twelve years of school in Salem. The first six years at the Columbia Street School and junior high in Fourth Street and, of course, high school was on Lincoln Avenue and graduated in 1932. Then I went up to Mount Union College, graduated in 1936. Then I took part in sports. I played basketball, track and cross country. My coach wouldn't let me play football, he said I was too skinny, not heavy enough.

Well, I was told to prepare for two subjects at Mount Union College. I did want to enter the flying squadron in Akron Goodyear, which many of the students at Mount Union went into. The year I was to graduate, there was a strike and they discontinued it, so I relied on teaching and went into teaching.

The first school was Penfield, which is on Route 18 just five miles east of Wilmington. There were about forty students in the high school. I taught all the science and math and agriculture.

H: What did the course in agriculture consist of?

W: Oh, it was just a general course on the breeds of cattle and sheep and pigs. It was only a half-year course. Being a farmer, I didn't have too much trouble, even though I didn't have many college backing to teach that subject. They were farm boys and they understood very well. I got along alright I guess.

Alright, I don't know whether you want me to go back to college and talk about my majors and minors.

H: Okay, before we do that, what was your early schooling like? What do you remember of elementary school in particular, to start with?

W: Well, the only thing I can recall, of course, I was mostly in the same class as my twin sister and I did manage to get transferred to one other room because it was too crowded and they asked for volunteers and of course, I was first one to put my hand up. I can remember my first grade teacher very well, Miss Cook. She was very stern and she certainly knew how to handle kids. I know I never gave her any trouble. My teachers, well, I had no complaints for any of my teachers in elementary. I did have an aunt, Mrs. Charles Holby, for a substitute for about six weeks and I was kind of afraid the kids would find out and tease me, so I always made sure I called her Mrs. Holby instead of Aunt Betty. Okay? (Laughter)

H: Yes. Why was having a twin sister so bad?

W: Well, any little thing that went wrong, why she'd run home and tell on me and then of course, if she did anything wrong, she always talked me out of it. I remember when she got a spanking in first grade, I think probably we were in fourth or fifth grade when my mother

and dad found out about it. I wouldn't tell on her, but she liked to tell on me. But I guess that was just part of the thing to do in those days, I don't hold it against her.

H: Okay. What was your routine like in elementary school?

W: I really don't know what to tell you because you studied and you had oral recitations, of course, you had spelling. We would have spelling up through high school. Of course, in high school we didn't have it as often, maybe once or twice a week. We had twenty-five words and we always knew what they were and we could study.

H: Was it taught in a separate subject or part of an English course?

W: No, it was in homeroom. We had it in homeroom before classes started.

H: Well, how long was this homeroom period then?

W: Well, we usually had about a fifteen minute homeroom period. The tardy bell rang then you studied your spelling before, then after the tardy bell rang on those days you had spelling, then that's when we had spelling. We had a separate grade for spelling. In fact, we even had a separate grade for poems.

H: This was in high school?

W: Yes. Well, that was in junior high, the poems. I don't remember having poems in high school. It was junior high we had the poems.

H: What time did you start school?

W: Oh, I think it was around 8:00. I think the tardy bell rang about 8:10 and we were allowed in homeroom about 8:00.

H: And when were you out?

W: 3:30 or 3:45 or something like that. I just don't remember, it has been so long ago.

H: Do you remember how long your lunch time was?

W: Well, in junior high and high school we had an hour because I know I was able to go home for lunch.

H: How far was it from the school?

W: Well, junior high and high school was about a mile and a quarter, so I always ran home and then I'd walk back. If I was late, they never caught me tardy, and I tried not to be tardy because I didn't want to take advantage of a privilege.

H: Did everyone have to go home for lunch or did they have a cafeteria?

W: No, they had no cafeteria, but they were allowed to bring a lunch. I just didn't care for a packed lunch, that's why I went home. Of course, when the weather got bad, mother did pack my lunch.

H: Where did you eat then?

W: Oh, in homeroom. I don't remember if the teachers had to stay there. No, it wasn't homeroom, it was studyhall because my teacher was in charge. I remember that. They would take turns.

H: Okay. When you got to high school then, you took an academic course?

W: Well, I took three years of math, three years of science, three years of English, three years of industrial arts and two years of French. That made my credits. We didn't have to take four years of English then.

H: So, when you went to college you didn't have particular requirements to get into college?

W: Well, I had the necessary math courses that they wanted and three years of English, and in science I had chemistry and biology and general science. In math, I had algebra, geometry, solid geometry, and algebra II.

H: When you were in school, elementary through high school, were your teachers predominantly female, predominantly male, a mixture?

W: Well, it was definitely predominantly female because all three years of my math were women teachers. My science courses, I had two women and one man because I had Mr. Jones for chemistry. In English, they were all women, all three. Industrial arts was a man, I had two different men for that. So, I'd say over three fourths of them were women.

H: Do you remember if most of them were single or a lot of them were married?

W: Most of them were single because in junior high I remember the ones that were widows like Mrs. Ross, she was a widow, she taught eighth grade math, and Miss Arthur, she wasn't married. There was a . . . Of course, I didn't have Mrs. Inglehart, I had her husband in mechanical drawing, she was married. And Miss Red that I had for biology, she was single.

I think the only reason why this one woman was married, because they met there at school and they got married and they just didn't fire here, she got married to this man from school the only thing I can see. But most of them were single or, as I say, widows.

H: So, you became a teacher when your program that you had been in in college was dropped because of the strike?

W: Yes, it was discontinued.

H: Why did you choose teaching?

W: Well, of course I was interested in athletics and I thought, "Well, I'll teach so I can coach," and then, of course, later on when I got older I coached so I could teach. Then I gave up coaching at the last school I was at.

H: Then did you have to take extra courses because you went into education?

W: Well I, of course, to get my salary increments at Howland, I had to take some extension work from Kent State University instead of Youngstown. And, of course, we were paid \$15 an hour. I think I ended up at \$15, something like that.

H: Okay, so basically what were the courses that you had taken in order to prepare for the flying squadron?

W: Well, all they wanted there was a general academic course, but for my teaching I had to have a major in education and my other major was biology, and we had to have two minors and my minor at Mount Union was English and French.

H: Why French?

W: Well, I got better grades in French than I did in English.

H: Was there any other interest in the French?

W: No, all I ever said was that when I took a job I said that if you see that qualification of French on my certificate, please don't make me teach French because I only had the minor. I didn't want to teach it. I did some substituting when I came back from the service in French, but I just didn't have the background to teach French and I didn't have the time to prepare it with coaching and all, why, that took up a lot of my time. I had enough trouble with some of these other subjects like physics. I had a rough time with some of that especially electricity because I didn't have much of a background in physics. I'd really be lost now if I went back even in chemistry because with so much, well, chemistry I taught is just elementary stuff now. The elements and things that's all you had to learn. Those courses that I took to get my increments, they were administrative courses. I took it at Kent Extension.

H: You say you had a general academic education. Did you have to go to school longer in order to pick up the things you needed for education?

W: No, because the requirements then was if you had three years of math and three years of English and a minor in science you'd qualify, and I had majors in all three of them.

H: And then you had to do student teaching?

W: Yes, I did it at Alliance High School in Jefferson.

H: And how long was your student teaching time?

W: One semester.

H: Which would be sixteen weeks, eighteen weeks?

W: Eighteen weeks, but I had one class a day, but I'd have to go down there everyday.

H: That was your student teaching?

W: Yes.

H: You didn't have to stay in the building the whole day?

W: No.

H: What would you do with the rest of the day?

W: Well, I had classes. This was in college.

H: Okay, explain your student teaching experience.

W: Well, I sat in under my advisor for one week, and I observed him, and the next Monday he came out and said, "Ed, it's yours," and he walks out. Once in awhile he'd come back in and check on me and see how I was doing. Well, he must have been satisfied. It seemed to be, I'd talk to some of the others, and they had the same thing, he just turned it over to them after they had watched him two or three days. Then maybe once a week my advisor would come down, maybe not that often, give me a few pointers, do this or don't do that, don't talk too much, give a little more attention to having kids participate more and don't lecture too much. I think that's the trouble with a lot of the student teachers, they want to lecture too much.

H: Okay, then you had one class a day for eighteen weeks? Was this a morning class or an afternoon class?

W: Yes, it was a class just before lunch so I was able to travel back my lunch period. They arrange your schedule, so I'd maybe have an 8:00 and 9:00 class and then a couple in the afternoon. Of course, I wouldn't have as many classes because, I don't remember how many hours we got, I think three hours.

H: And when did you do your student teaching? What year would that have been?

W: My senior year, 1936.

H: 1936. In your student teaching for this one course, were you responsible then for giving all the grades?

W: Yes, I had to make out grades, the final grades too.

H: Alright, what were your lessons plans like or didn't you have to do them?

W: Well, we had to submit them every Friday for the following, coming week.

H: Alright, and something like general science, were you teaching a unit that you were following through?

W: Yes.

H: Or was it just like a five day unit?

W: No, you were pretty much on your own. Rather than run through it and not get it over, why, they'd let you go till the end and complete it. In other words, no one said you had to do it in four days or ten days, there wasn't anything set like that. All they wanted you to do is finish the course. Now, they had to make a little leeway because sometimes some of the material goes faster than you figure on, and sometimes it goes slower, so they just don't say you had to do it and cover six pages today and eight pages tomorrow. Sometimes you have to go back over it when you know they didn't get it because, you know, when you have a science background and some of that stuff you think you can put across a lot easier than it happens sometimes.

H: Yes. Then were there any other requirements for the student teaching that you remember?

W: No, I know we weren't paid anything to do it like they are today. (Laughter)

H: So, then you started teaching and you went to Penfield?

W: Yes, to Penfield.

H: What was your first day like or your first year like?

W: Oh, I'll never forget the first day, I thought I had my lessons all planned for a whole 45 minutes and I was done in twenty. So, rather than go back over it again, I just started talking to the members of the class and we talked about their home life and getting acquainted. Of course, the kids told me some stories about their other teachers.

As I say, I was very fortunate that I got the job. In fact, I got my contract in the mail on Friday and Monday was Labor Day and I started the day after.

H: Okay, when you graduated from college, were jobs hard to come by?

W: Well, yes, they were. I had interviewed for a job at Grafton and they hired another man because he had football experience and they had football. Then this Penfield job came up right after this fellow was hired

and then they called me back and told me about this. I went up and interviewed the board members just a week before school started.

H: Did you have to talk to all the board members?

W: Yes, I went to see all of them individually?

H: Now, did you have to set up the appointment or was that done through the superintendent?

W: No, the superintendent called and told me to come and try and see all the board members you can because it was such a short notice. I just had to take a chance that they were home. Of course, most of them, they were all farmers, so they were home.

H: What did you teach this first year that you taught?

W: I taught all the science and math, which one year I'd teach algebra and I taught general science and I taught chemistry and geometry. Then I taught that agriculture class, and then I'd have only four or five assemblies.

H: How many periods were there in a day?

W: I don't know whether there was six or seven.

H: Then if you had four subjects then. . .

W: I know when I had started, some classes I had, I had study hall in the back of the room along with my class.

H: Why was this?

W: There was only three teachers. There were only three teachers and the other two were teaching somewhere, someplace and somebody didn't have a class, so if I happened to have my class in the study hall, well I got the kids that weren't in some class.

H: So, Penfield was a big school of how many?

W: Approximately forty students. The first year I was there, there was only thirty-eight, three in the senior class. Well, one nice thing, you really got to know every kid in the school, student I mean.

H: Okay then, what kind of a building did you have?

W: Well, all twelve grades in one building; it was one story. So, you had eight rooms.

H: Eight rooms for twelve grades?

W: And the elementary teachers taught two grades, one in first and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth.

H: What was the largest class that was there, do you recall?

W: I think they had one with about fifteen.

H: Big class.

W: Of course, some of the classes were a little larger than others because, well, like general science, they teach it one year and then the next year they teach biology. So, some year I would have freshman in biology and sophomores in general science another year. And the same way with chemistry and physics. Chemistry, I'd have juniors and seniors together.

H: Okay, then there were three high school teachers?

W: Yes.

H: And you three taught all the. . .

W: All the subjects, yes, and then one was the principal. He taught social studies and industrial arts and a woman teacher taught all the English and Latin; she taught Latin. That was the only foreign language she taught.

H: So, you did know all the students very well?

W: Yes.

H: I agree with that. What social restrictions did you encounter teaching in a small school like that?

W: Well, being a small community like that, they knew everything you were doing. One place that I stayed, or the only place I stayed while I was at Penfield, the man asked me to buy him a corn cob pipe and he told me where to go and I went there and they said, "Oh no, we don't have them here. You go next door in the saloon, they have them." So, I wasn't going back and telling him I couldn't get it. So, I went in and tried to get

it and, of course, I ended up not getting a corn cob pipe anyway. The next day after I got to school, one of my students came up and said, "Mr. Wilms, I hear you staggered out of the saloon yesterday." So, all they had to do is see me and they assumed that I had a couple beers and all that stuff. I know better than to drink beer, well, I never drank it anyway. It was kind of a joke to me. I didn't let it bother me.

H: Were there social restrictions? Did you have to be careful in any way, or did you feel pressured?

W: No, I would say no. Of course, my social life was pretty limited in that I was coaching softball in the fall and spring and basketball in the winter. So, and I always came home on weekends to Columbiana. So, I wasn't there on the weekends at all.

H: Okay, because you were not living in your own community or could live with a family, where did you live? I mean how did you choose a place?

W: Well, I asked some of the board members when I talked to them. I said, "Well, if I get this job I'll have to have a place to stay." The one person, of course, didn't recommend this Clagan's where I stayed because they had lost, they owned a store. They bought a store and couldn't pay for it and they took it back of course, they would recommend it. I finally got a hold of somebody that told me to go see Mr. Clagan. They're very nice people, just treated me like a son.

H: What was your beginning salary?

W: \$1,100.

H: And this was in 1936?

W: Yes, fall of 1936 and I was hired back four years in a row and I got a \$25 raise each year.

H: Was there any supplemental contract for the coaching that you did?

W: No, not there.

H: Okay, out of your \$1,100, how much of it then did you have to turn around and spend on your room and board?

W: I got my room and board for \$20 a month.

H: That included all your meals?

W: Yes.

H: Now, since you were coaching, you were out later in the evening I presume. Did she have a meal waiting for you or did you fix it yourself?

W: Oh well, I'd go home for supper. These boys had chores to do, so we had to practice at night see, when it was dark. So, that was no problem, when the meals were ready I ate with them.

H: So, when did the practices run then if you had to have them after dark?

W: I usually ran it from 7:00 till 9:00. And it was quite an experience. I really enjoyed that there. The only reason why I left Penfield was that I got more money when I went to Wakeman and it was a bigger school. Of course, everybody tries to advance.

H: Was Wakeman close to Penfield?

W: Oh, it was about twenty miles. Wakeman is in Huron County and Penfield was in Lorain County. Then I taught just one year at Wakeman, and it was a larger school. There were more teachers. I think they had five high school teachers there. I know all the grades were in one building there, too. Taught one year and then I had to register for the draft and I went to the Draft Board and they said that you'd probably have to go in November. So, rather than break up two years of teaching I enlisted in July. Of course, the war had come along and instead of spending one year, I spent four years and eight months in the service.

H: Now, what year did you enlist?

W: July 3, 1941.

H: What branch of the service were you in?

W: Well, the Army, the medical department of the Army.

H: What does that mean? What did you do? What training did you have?

W: Well, I took basic training at Camp Lee, Virginia and when I finished there I was sent to Fort Bragg, and

there I worked in the First Sergeant's Office. I started out as a file clerk and I ended up being acting First Sergeant before I left to go to--I was sent to Carlyle Barracks in Pennsylvania. When I left there I went to Mississippi Ordinance Plan. I was then a tech sergeant and I was the assistant to the surgeon of the post. I guess you would call it sergeant major. I had finally gotten my masters sergeant's stripes there. And then I was compelled to sign up for OTS, which I didn't want to go. He told me, he said, "Ed, you won't have to go. Go ahead and sign up." Two weeks later the orders came out, I was to report to Camp Barkley, Texas for Officer Training School. I got my commission there in November of 1943. And then after that I was assigned temporary duty to Armon General Hospital while I was waiting for assignment overseas. About all I did was proofread section eights in the medical department for typographical errors.

H: Section eights?

W: Yes, section eights. And then I was finally sent to California where they, in turn, sent us to Fort Louis and then I went to the Hawaiian Islands.

H: You were in the Hawaiian Islands?

W: There I was assigned to the 2nd Battallion of the 389th Regiment of the 98th Division, which happened to be in the same regiment as my brother Lee, who was a supply sergeant in the battalion headquarters, so I was able to see him quite often. We did have a little problem, my brother's commanding officer was very unhappy that he, a sergeant, and me, a second lieutenant, saw too much of each other to his liking. So, we did get to see each other and that was a good part that I liked. That meant more to me than getting a promotion, which was held up for that very reason. But he finally was transferred and then I got a promotion to first lieutenant, which I had when I was discharged.

From the Hawaiian Islands we did go to Japan as the Occupation Forces and we landed just outside of Osaka. We had temporary quarters in the Osaka Airport. We had quite a problem there. My job was to help eradicate bedbugs in the barracks before we could move in. All we used there was DDT dissolved in kerosine. It certainly did the job.

H: From some of the things that you said, basically you

were doing paperwork and this type of thing. Once you got overseas, were your jobs the same?

W: No, when I got my commission, then of course, when we went overseas I was in the battalion aid station. We didn't go out on maneuvers. We were a standby for any accidents.

I always wondered how I would react if I ever got in combat, but we were called while we were in the Hawaiian Islands to a case where some fellows were sent out to replant trees that they'd burn up in real bombing practices, and one of the fellows picked up a dud and carried it around and near as they can figure, they took a break and he was there just pounding it on the grapevine or something and it blew up and injured about seven people. When we got there, I soon found out that you'd be so busy trying to do something that you wouldn't worry about what a person looked like when they were wounded. This one fellow died before we even could give him any plasma. He really, his whole leg was just chewed up something terrible, just like hamburger. So, that ended my fears of what would happen if we ever got to combat, but fortunately the war ended before we were sent to invade Japan. I didn't have any other experiences like that.

H: How long were you in Japan?

W: I don't know, I think probably three or four months.

H: And this was in?

W: 1945.

H: And then you came back to the United States and were in the service, what, several months before you were discharged?

W: Well, I had enough leave time that I wasn't discharged until February of 1946. See, they paid you. They wouldn't discharge you until you had your leave time made up. I got home just about Christmas time in 1945. So, I was in Japan then probably about four months.

The funny part of it was, Lee and I had orders to go home on the same orders, but he got to go home two months before I did because, being an officer, I had to wait for passage. He got home for Thanksgiving

even, and I didn't. The only reason is I didn't have enough points. They sent officers home on points, but I got to come home a little earlier than other officers because it said anybody with pre-Pearl Harbor service in the medics could go home and that's how I got to come home earlier. I think we had to have something like sixty points and I had about forty-five. But with this order, that took preference over all the others, so I got to come home earlier.

H: Pre-Pearl Harbor?

W: Yes, it was July, 1941.

H: Oh, in other words, you had enlisted before Pearl Harbor? I see. So, you came out of the service, and where did you start to teach?

W: I went back to Wakeman. And they had forgot to tell the woman that took my place that I was a veteran, that I would get my job back. Rather than push her out, I did some substituting. I taught there at Wakeman for two more years. Then I went to Berlin Heights where I coached basketball and track. Then I took a job at Mount Union College as an Education Counsellor, going to various high schools in Northeastern Ohio, talking to students who were interested in going to Mount Union College. Then I went back to teaching. I taught at Norwalk one year. And then I got the job at Howland and taught seventeen years.

H: Okay, when you did this work for Mount Union, were you also teaching at the time?

W: No, I was on the road.

H: Okay, when--time period--were you doing that?

W: Well, I remember now, it was February 1953 and 1954 because I went to Norwalk in 1954.

H: And from there you went to Howland?

W: Yes.

H: Alright, you say that you had been a coach all this time?

W: Yes, up 'till Howland. At Howland I just had junior high basketball, that's all I had. Howland you never

coach more than one sport.

H: Why did you give coaching up?

W: I had to go back every night and the increment did not seem worthy of it when we moved here to Hubbard, I couldn't see driving back there every night for practice. We didn't have a gym there that I could practice. I had to use the high school gym.

H: And so, when were your practices run?

W: Oh same thing, about 7:00 to 9:00 again. It never made sense to me. The varsity played their games at night and we played ours in the afternoon. They practiced after school because the coach lived in Poland. I lived in Girard when we first started and it was only just, it wasn't ten miles from Girard. I didn't mind it then. But out here it was another ten or fifteen miles, ten miles, and I figured, well, it isn't worth it. I told the superintendent, "If you get anybody to come and wants to coach basketball in junior high, my job's available." So, he says, I'll keep it in mind." About two years later I was out planting strawberry plants and he come out, "Does that offer still hold?" I said, "It sure does." He said, "Well, I've got a fellow that wants to take that over." And I said, "Good."

H: What subjects did you teach at Howland?

W: The first year I taught five different subjects. I taught physics, general math, general science, algebra. I don't remember the other one now.

H: Now, were you teaching high school?

W: Yes, that was high school. Then the school grew so much that I started to just teach math classes. Then I introduced the program math where a student progresses at his own rate. I got this setup from Norwalk. They had it there when I was there. So, I introduced it in Howland. And as far as I know, they still have it there.

H: Okay, how was this organized for the students, because in junior high, don't they have different class periods?

W: Well yes, it was a regular class period. They'd come in there and study and then when they were ready to take the test they'd sign up for the test. They had to pass it before they could go to the next unit.

H: Alright, did you have all levels working in a class period or did they group them?

W: No, each one worked individually. They had a program math book that the answers were in the back cover and they'd see if they could work it. And if they couldn't get the answer that was there, they'd come to me and they'd find out why and how to do it. And I would give them tests that would be similar problems to what was in the unit. It was set up in such a way that you get some students that go very fast. They had no business being in there, really. I'll give you an example. One girl, I had, she was very mixed up. She didn't know what to do. She almost got through the algebra course that I had. She really kept me going because nobody ever came that close. She didn't quite get through and she turned out to be a very good student. She should have been in algebra to begin with, but she was a little unstable at home or what. I finally told her, "If I were you, I would go to summer school and take algebra." I said, "There's no use you wasting a whole year taking algebra," because I couldn't give her credit for algebra in the given math course. I said, "It will be a snap for you in summer school with all the background you've had." If she got a B, it was terrible. Her father just wouldn't tolerate it. She said, "I talked with my dad and he didn't want me to go." I said, "Well, explain to him. You're going to be all mixed up again. You'll be so bored in that algebra class that you'll get sick again." So, she talked him into it. She went to summer school and took algebra and passed the course with flying colors.

H: Now, you say this was general math?

W: Yes.

H: Now, had you gotten materials or did you make up your own algebra for her?

W: The program math is in algebra and you could get it in geometry. And I had algebra books because I knew some of these kids would be so much better. What I set for the minimum for the year, some of them were through at Christmas time. So, rather than throw them in studyhall, why, I let them go on with algebra.

H: Did you have the geometry too, for some?

W: No.

H: Just the algebra and the general math?

W: I never had anybody finish all the algebra because there's just a little too much algebra there for them to get that far. There were only three books of general math, and I think there were five in algebra, so it covered a lot more material.

H: Did you ever have any periods where you had group instruction?

W: My free period, I'd once in awhile have some of them come in if they wanted any help. But whatever come, they figured if they had any problems they could see me right in class, so I just finally gave up and offered to have them come in. I really hate to discourage that because sometimes you get a girl that you don't want in there. (Laughter)

H: During your teaching experiences, how much parent involvement did you have or find?

W: I didn't have too much. I remember one place in Wakeman, one girl who got very nasty and I just grabbed her by the hair and I said, "Now that's enough of that. You don't talk to me like that." She said, "My mother will be up to see you tomorrow." I said, "That's fine. I want to talk to her too." She never came. The teachers told me, when they heard that I pulled her hair, they said, "You're going to see her mother tomorrow."

H: Okay, this leads into the area of discipline. Did you have to be careful how you handled discipline or did you have a fairly open hand?

W: I think I had a fairly open hand. I paddled. Often times though, I'd give them the choice of detention and they preferred the paddle.

In Howland a couple women teachers asked me to paddle some boys because if they paddled them, the kids just laughed at them, and I was never called on the carpet for it. It wasn't very often, but some of those women teachers got so mad they just swung and they missed by a mile. Oh I suppose it's only four or five times that I did that all the time I was there.

H: When you paddled, were there certain guidelines that you followed?

- W: They asked you not to put holes in them. We'd drill holes (into the paddle) so it would sting more. No, all they asked is that you had a witness so then they couldn't say that you were so mad you didn't know what you were doing.
- H: Was this true all the way through your teaching?
- W: No, no, just at Howland. They had that rule that you had to have a witness. Then when I paddled somebody, I'd usually wait 'till the end of the period so I wouldn't break up somebody's, a teacher's, class or anything. The last minute or two I'd give them the high sign and they would know it and they'd step right out, a couple swats. It only takes a minute. The last minute or two you don't do anything in the class anyway. Some of those kids today, I guess they close their books ten minutes before the period's over (laughter).
- H: Did you have to be careful about paddling them in front of the class or did you paddle in front of the class?
- W: I've done both, but usually I took them out in the hall with the witness. I don't think you gained anything by paddling the kid on front of the class. Of course, some of them insisted on it and I said, "Okay." Most of them would say, "Let's go out in the hall."
- H: You had, what, thirty-five years of teaching?
- W: Counting my Army time.
- H: Well, thirty, actually, years of teaching.
- W: Yes.
- H: What major change did you see in education?
- W: Discipline.
- H: What about discipline?
- W: Well, you never had to answer to what or why. When you told them to do something now, they want to know why they have to do it. Maybe that's good. But they're not as respectable to a teacher as they used to be. Heck, when I went to school I never challenged a teacher. I don't know whether I was afraid to or what. I just respected a teacher. I thought they did the right thing whatever they did.

H: Do you believe, as some people say, that teachers have lost the respect for themselves?

W: Yes.

H: In what way?

W: I always hated to hear a teacher say, "Don't hold it against me because I'm a teacher." They lost respect for themselves when they talk like that.

H: Are there any other ways?

W: I suppose there are. I know some of these young ones, they just gave me the impression that all they were interested in is the money and the coffee breaks and the fringe benefits. They just didn't seem like dedicated students (teachers). I'll give you an example. I asked one, "Do you grade papers at night?" He said, "Hell no. I'm not paid to grade papers at night." That's the attitude of a lot of teacher today?

H: What do you think of teachers striking?

W: I don't like it. I figure when you sign a contract you should live by it. Of course, I imagine they'll have to do it to get some of these boards to see that teachers deserve a little more money than they are getting. I really don't like it. But I know the ones at Howland that didn't go out on strike, they sure weren't treated very good when they came back.

H: By whom?

W: By the teachers that went on strike.

H: Okay. Are there any changes that you would like to see made?

W: Let's see. I think colleges are missing the boat on preparing teachers. A lot of the things that I found out were never brought up in my teacher training.

H: Such as?

W: The students--I had to learn the hard way that you have to look out for these kids that need help. They never said, "Look at a kids background to see if he's having trouble at home." The only way you find out is when somebody will tell you and they don't do that very often.

- H: Were their records, the permanent records, open to you in all your schools?
- W: Yes. But I did not want to see a kid's IQ because I didn't think that's the true value of a student. I've seen too many teachers go look and they see somebody with a high IQ, they think, "Oh," and then they don't produce. And I didn't want to go look.
- H: How else could colleges improve teacher training.
- W: I think they ought to screen some of the people some way. I don't know how they're going to do it because too many teachers come out that shouldn't be teachers. Don't you think so? Some, anyway.
- H: Well, I'll answer a question with a question. Do you think if teachers were paid more we'd get a higher quality person in the classroom?
- W: Probably would, we probably would. But I don't know how they're going to get the money to pay them with if all these levies keep failing. There's got to be a different way to raise money to pay the teachers than by local levies.
- H: Is there anything important that you feel we have not covered, that you would like to comment on?
- W: Well, I can't think of anything.
- H: Alright, thank you very much.
- W: You're welcome!

END OF INTERVIEW