

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Salem Schools

Teaching Experience

O. H. 312

RUTH LOOP

Interviewed

by

James McNeal

on

October 11, 1975

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M: This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Loop for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, History of Salem Schools Project, by James L. McNeal, at the home of Mrs. Loop, 1544 East Third Street, Salem, Ohio, on October 11, 1975, at 12:00 p.m.

Mrs. Loop, the first thing I'd like to touch on is questions having to do with how and why you decided to go into teaching.

L: I kind of just slid into it, I think. I thought I wanted to be a social worker, and my second year in college I found that I would have to take a course, economics, they just started. I just hated it. I couldn't understand it, I wasn't interested in it. I thought, if I have to go through this, then social work is not my field. In those days, if you couldn't be anything else, you could be a teacher. I was majoring, and I changed my major from social studies to French, because I was very much interested in languages. I enjoyed learning languages. I decided I would become a teacher, which is the very ladylike thing to do. The Depression came along while I was still in college, and I sent applications to thirty high schools. I got one answer, which was in Alliance. They were reinstating a class in German, at that time. During World War I, they cut it out of the curriculum, and they were reinstating that. Because German was my minor, I was hired to teach German, but I also taught English over there and history. I never did teach French, which was my major. I just kind of slid into it. Although, I

always liked the idea of teaching a class. I loved playing school, but I guess all kids do that, when I was a little child.

M: Where and when did you receive your training?

L: At Lake Erie College in Painesville, from 1926 to 1930. I had some advanced courses at the University of Michigan, I went to summer school, two summers, there. I was teaching all German, finally, in Alliance, and I wanted more credits in German. Not only credits, but I wanted the information, and to be fluent and all that. I stayed two summers, and later on, after I came here and was teaching history, I took a correspondence course in history from Ohio University. I needed some more hours in order to be really accredited in history. That's the extent of my education.

M: When did you first come to Salem?

L: In 1946, we moved here. I substituted for quite a few years. In 1951, I didn't want to start to teach regularly, I still had a small child, and one daughter in school. I had been substituting and Mr. Levy called me one day and said, "Will you come?" This was on a Wednesday in November. He said, "Will you come and teach history for a few days?" I said, "Yes." He said, "The history teacher also has to have pension. Will you work on the newspaper?" I said, "Oh, I can't do that." He said, "Just come and babysit them for those three days. I think by that time we could find a regular teacher. They young man was sent back to his hometown, he found a job there, and the board had to release him." I went down on that Wednesday in 1951 and I stayed until 1970.

M: Did you know anything at all about the Salem school system before that, the staff or the administration?

L: Not until I started substituting. We had not lived in Salem very long. It's my husband's hometown, but we had lived elsewhere. When we moved back here, then I put in an application for substituting. I don't know further back.

M: Do you remember any particular feeling that you had when as, not a new teacher, but a new teacher to the Salem school district?

L: Yes, I was scared to death. I'd been out of teaching for twelve years. I told Mr. Kerr, the superintendent, when he called me, that I just didn't think that I

could teach again. I was out for twelve years, and I was rusty, and all that. He said, "Well, you did teach school once, didn't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, you'll be able to do it again." Everybody was very helpful. I loved it right from the beginning.

M: To move on to another topic for a second, everyone that I have spoken to, either on these tapes or in conversation unrecorded, seems to bring up the name of E.S. Kerr. Just as an aside for a few minutes, what are your remembrances concerning that man in the Salem school system, your association with him?

L: My association was a very happy one. I don't know as I ever had any problems with him. I don't think he ever said no to anything that I wanted. He was very well educated. He expressed himself very well and very clearly. He was cooperative with the teachers that he approved of. I think that he could be very hard on somebody he didn't like or who was having troubles or was spreading a bad name for the school system. Although, I don't know of any special examples to give. Somehow or other when he talked I knew that I should have gone back. My experience was a very happy one. It remained that way until he died. I felt that he handled the public very well. He could make very good speeches, knew what to say to people. He came into a lot of criticism, too. I don't know exactly why, I think maybe some of them thought he acted superior. I think he was superior to a lot of people that he was trying to influence to vote for a bond issue, for a levy, or something like that. All in all, I think he was a very good superintendent. He was always appreciative if you did anything well; he came to the office several times and told me he liked a special issue of the Quaker and thought it was very well done, or something like that.

M: You pointed him out for that particular thing. Were superintendents that followed, perhaps, less personal about that sort of thing?

L: Yes. They were very different than him. I always felt comfortable with Mr. Kerr and with some of the other superintendents. I didn't even know them, and I'm sure that they didn't know me either. Mr. Smith, that was somebody different, he was very different from Mr. Kerr. He and I got along very well together. It was because of his support that we were able to get the problems of democracy course.

- M: Now, again, these first few years in the Salem school system, do you have any comments you'd care to make about the attitude of the students and staff members of that time?
- L: You mean when I first came to Salem?
- M: When you first came to Salem.
- L: Yes, I must say that the attitude of the students is much different, teachers too, as far as that goes. I think that teachers were much more devoted to their work and willing to put in extra time than they are now. So often now, you see the teachers walking out with the students. They aren't at the library, they can't use the library after school, things like that. I have had men teachers at the high school tell me no, they weren't going to come to any meeting after school unless they got paid for it. I know that they need money, and I don't suppose that we're the best paid school system in Ohio, but it seemed to me that they were a little lacking in dedication to their profession. As far as the students went, they were much more respectful of teachers than they are now. The teacher was on a small pedestal. We were looked up to. I think, maybe I'm imagining this, but I think that's the way it was. Now, they don't mind arguing. It used to be that the teacher said something and you accepted it. Not now. I'm not sure that that's a bad thing. I used to encourage the students I had in POD, which was a very informal class, because we had open discussions. I would tell them early in the year that they were not to accept what I said as gospel truth; if they questioned anything I said, ask about it. Then you could get an open forum. Some of them went to the extremes. They used to call us names behind our back, we all knew that, but it was intended for affection, I think. Not now, they're all hate. Maybe they have changed in the last few years.
- M: Remembrances of the staff, at that time, did everybody seem to get along together, or did they all seem to . . .
- L: Much better than they do now, from my past experiences. I found it very difficult the last few years that I taught to get along with some of the teachers. New ones who came in, I found they were very, very critical of the teachers who were already there. I don't know, maybe we deserved criticism, but it was not a very nice-mannered criticizing that they exercised. In the olden days, the teachers were

more of a group. We knew each other, for one thing, the school was small. We knew each other, we had parties together, called each other by first names. We were a friendly, understanding, helpful group back then. That's not the way it is now. Even though the addition had not been built to the high school while I was there, that is the new high school, it was so big that when we had an influx of new, young teachers, some of them I never did know, which is too bad.

M: Just from the physical structure of the building?

L: Yes, that's right.

M: How many were on the staff at the . . . it is now a junior high, at 230 North Lincoln, where you started?

L: Oh, I can't begin to tell you.

M: Twenty or thirty?

L: We were, when it was the high school?

M: When it was the high school.

L: I imagine there were 35, maybe. Maybe more than that.

M: Did you have a teachers' room?

L: Yes, we did. I think it's still a teachers' room, where the men and women go together.

M: It has moved several times. Where was it then?

L: It was on the third floor on the end of the south hall. A large room, both men and women used the fixtures there. That was nice, you weren't segregated the way they are up there now. Little cubicles that we had for sitting rooms, they're a mockery, and the men are next door in their room. You can hear them pounding and laughing, and telling dirty jokes. There we sat. It was nicer in the old building as far as that room. There were advantages to the new building of course, but there wasn't the warmth among the teachers now that there used to be, I think.

M: You mentioned when you took the job, the request to take the school newspaper and the annual went with it and you turned it down, at least for those three days that you were supposed to go. How was it that you wound up with the many years as supervisor and advisor to the biweekly and the annual?

- L: Well, when they didn't seem to be able to find a qualified person to teach both history and advise the publications, I stayed. I had to learn from scratch, I knew nothing about publications. The editor, editors and staff that had been chosen for that year--now this was in November, you see--some of them had never been on the staff before, but there were a couple of editors who had been and they knew something about putting out the paper. We managed. Mr. Ludwig was very kind and very helpful, and very forebearing. I'm sure that I didn't meet with all the requirements. When I became more and more interested in it, Mr. Hillmandrock, who was the school treasurer at that time, suggested that I take the editors down to a journalism workshop that they had at Ohio University every year. We went down, and we had a ball, and we learned a lot! The first year that I was there, the newspaper rated third class. It was nationally selected presses, Scholastic Press Association, which was very poor. The next year we got up to first class, and it was only because of what we had learned at Ohio University and because I had such good kids always. They were the cream of the crop. They were there because they wanted to be. They worked like anything. The next year we got All-American. From then on, we were All-American.
- M: You say you had the cream of the crop, how did it come about that certain students worked on the biweekly or annual, or both?
- L: They volunteered. They came into the office and said, "We want to be on the staff." If there was an exceptionally good student in English class, this teacher might mention it to me and I'd go to this student, or maybe her friend would approach her if she were already on the staff, and ask her to be a reporter, or whatever. It was mostly volunteer. It seemed to be kind of a matter of prestige to be on the Quaker staff. I don't know that it is now, I don't know very much about it now. It's much different than it was. I don't know that we gave those kids special privileges, the editors yes, they were given more freedom to roam around the buildings during class time. That is, if they were assigned to the Quaker office for a period. Mr. Ludwig didn't mind if they walked around the building contacting teachers for information or taking pictures or something like that. He could have been very harsh on us, but he was a very understanding guy. I don't know, they like it, all of them. I never had an editor that wasn't a success. I liked them. That's the part I miss most of all. I don't know,

that POD class was pretty good towards the end of my career. I think it's mostly publications that I really felt at home with.

M: How many students did you usually carry for a staff? Was there a ceiling to the number that you would allow?

L: No, there wasn't. If you were a good writer and reporter you could be on the staff. How many would there have been? Twenty, thirty? Let's see, the newspaper might have had as many as twenty. Eventually, we ended up with more than one editor. We had an editor for the front page, a sports editor, and an editorial editor. There were about twenty on that staff, usually. On the yearbook, well, maybe about the same. Some of the students who worked on the newspaper worked on the yearbook, too. That, I shouldn't have let them do. That was too hard for them, but they loved it.

M: Where in the building did all these activities take place? You must have had a home base?

L: At the old building, it was a little cubicle right across from Herb Jones' laboratory. It was about 9 x 9. We couldn't get all of the staff in there at one time. I'll tell you, we were fanny to fanny. Maybe that was it. If somebody had to bend over, everybody had to bend over. (Laughter) I don't know how we put a paper out from there. I simply don't know. Those were marvelous kids. When they moved to the big building, I designed the kind of office I would like to have. The architect asked us all to do that. I designed this nice, big office where we could have lots of light and I could have a separate office for myself, separated from the working office with a glass window, big glass windows. I could work in my office and still see what was going on in the Quaker office. Sometimes when they were mad at me, they would come up and rap on the glass. They wanted to make me laugh. We had a divider, so that we could pull it across and the yearbook staff could work on one side and the newspaper on the other. It was roomy, we had files and shelves, all the things we needed, all that kind of thing. It was much easier up in the new building because we weren't quite so crowded.

M: Back in the old building, I had my AV department in that old room now, and I scraped all the letters off the window, Quaker. You know, those big, black, three-quarter inch letters?

L: I never had that on mine. That must have been another

editor.

M: It was across from 305.

L: Of course, it would be my old office.

M: It was on the third floor, across from 305, a tiny room. I didn't have enough room for myself and two boys that helped me. I don't know how you people ever got in and out of there to get the publications.

L: I don't either, we all fit. (Laughter) We had two typewriters, two typists there every day. At that long counter along the side, we had three, tall students and they wrote there. My desk was across from that, right by the door. That was my office too. I had this dumpy little desk, and I had to keep all the yearbook secrets in there. No drawers could lock, and it was my history office, too. I had to have kids come up there and take tests. I always had somebody out in the hall. Very often when I would confer with the editors, I would take them all up to the top of the steps. I don't know how we did it, we just did it. That's just how we did it.

M: First of all, this was still biweekly, the newspaper?

L: It started out as weekly for two or three years after I took it over, we put out a paper a week. I don't know how we did it.

M: That's what I want to know, how did you do it?

L: I haven't the slightest idea. We worked all the time. Those kids were dedicated, that's how we did it. Their parents, sometimes I got complaints from parents, because the editors, not necessarily the reporters, but the editors would have to sit up until late at night to meet a deadline, 2:00 in the morning, maybe. Their headlines, well, I was on the phone a lot at night with the kids, not that I phoned them, they phoned me to see if it was all right if they had these things, and so forth. They did a lot of work after school, too. Many, and many, and many of times I drove a couple of editors home because it was so late. In winter, I didn't want them hiking home, some of them had missed their bus. I was a taxi service, too. Many times we had everything here, too, paper and stuff.

M: Let's say you start Monday morning, you knew you had a paper coming out . . .

L: We didn't start Monday, ever, because Tuesday was

always our deadline, I remember that. We started a week before. You started on Monday a week before the paper was to come out to decide what the main stories would be. On Tuesday, we never worked on the the next paper because we were always busy trying to meet the deadline on this week's paper. Then on Wednesday, they made assignments, the editors made assignments on Wednesday to all of the reporters. They knew that they were to come into the office to get their assignments. If not, the editors would go after them. We had from Wednesday until the following Tuesday to work on that paper. Although, on Thursday, we got proofs from the printer. At noon, we would read the proofs, make corrections, because they had to be sent back to the printer by 1:00. We would work together during the lunch period because it was most convenient for all of us to be together, all of us, at that time. Then the editors would go over everything else. It had to be down at the printers at 4:00, I think it was, so that they could make the corrections and then get the paper out the next day. We would go down and pick it up at noon, theoretically, but often not until 1:00 or 2:00. I'm remembering this as we go along now.

M: Fine, that's fine.

L: As we got noticed and stuff, the business staff came in, the last year when we got it, to fold papers and put them in stacks to go to certain homerooms, and to be mailed out. We mailed out hundreds of papers to schools all over the country. First of all, we used to ask every school to exchange papers with us because we could learn from what they were doing. Then we began getting many, many requests after we had so many All-American's. We were mailing out a couple of hundred papers to different high schools by then, and at the time that I was there. We got all kind of letters from other high schools, but usually they were telling us we were wonderful. Not just criticizing, that was wonderful.

Then we went to Ohio University and I always took a group down there, over the summer. Finally, I taught down there in this workshop. We met many people down there from this area, from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia; everybody is from these states. We made many contacts there, learned a lot from them, they learned learned from us.

M: You mentioned once everything was all set it went to the printer, who was the printer?

L: Lyle Printing, still is.

M: Still is, in Salem?

L: Yes. Oh, well the Salem News did it for a couple of years. They might have done it for much longer than I thought they did. They were doing it when I moved in; they did it for a couple of years and decided it was too much trouble. What I should say, Lyle Printing did the newspaper. Salem Label did the yearbook printing for awhile. The Lyle got the yearbook contract. For a long time, they did the printing for both the yearbook and the newspaper.

M: Out of all the years you put in with, we'll call it the biweekly, the newspaper, even though it was weekly the first few years, and the annual, out of what must be a roomful of memories about that, are there any particular fond memories that you have of the people or the work, the years you spent on the high school publications?

L: There were a lot of fond memories. I suppose the fondest memory I have is the very close friendship that we developed with the editors, between the editors and me, among the editors and me. That meant more to me than anything else about it. Almost always, I hear at Christmas time from a few of the editors, now that has been way back. I do appreciate that. I think the very best editor I ever had, who I was very, very close to, was a boy named Vincent. Do you remember him?

M: Yes.

L: He was so talented and so interested in everything. He was editor for two years, which was most unusual to have a junior as editor of those two things. He had the ability and he wanted to do it, so I let him do it. He practically lived over here sometimes. I know when I'd be doing the laundry down in the basement, every now and then Vince would come tearing down saying, "Gee, I got this great idea for a story. Do you think we could do this and this and this tomorrow?" I was doing the laundry and we were also working on the paper. He got a scholarship to Yale and everything was so marvelous for him. He wrote me the most wonderful letters. He considered me his second mother, and I certainly considered him a son, I really did. That was very hard for me to take. That very close, warm relationship with somebody like that was very good, and I do miss him, even now. He always stopped in here during vacation. He felt his family didn't understand him, so he'd come over here and cut the bull and get all relieved, things like that. Let's see, is there any other

special memory like that? I did dearly enjoy the day that you presented the annuals. What's it called, that ceremony?

M: Recognition?

L: Yes. No, it wasn't recognition, it was for everybody. This was just to present the yearbook, and to name the king and queen. You remember. You better have remembered, it was such a tradition. At that time, I always made a speech about the editors. I was very glad to be able to let everybody else know how hard the editors worked and how I appreciated it, and all that. I liked that. I can't think of any other special thing. It was good all the time, it really was. Every time we put out an issue of the paper, or put out a yearbook, I felt just the greatest.

M: Better than the last.

L: That's right. I loved it all.

M: Certainly when relationships developed between you and the staff, there were relationships with classroom teachers you probably never dreamed of?

L: I think that's right, very much so. Really, we were together so much of the time, and so close together, you couldn't help it. We joked a lot. I think, maybe, the fact that we were able to joke about things that were serious made it easier for the kids to do that very hard work.

M: One other area that you were involved with, I know is very important to you along with the work on the publications, was the POD, Problems of Democracy, course. I'd like to ask a few questions and then develop this particular area as far as we can. When did this idea that a course like POD was needed to come about?

L: I think it was probably the first or second year that I was teaching history. Maybe you'll recall, in our history books there was one chapter devoted to the government of the United States, and that was it. I don't know why I was interested in government, I suppose I had a good college interest, because I took several history courses and I think we certainly got into government. I thought that we should have more than just one week to study the United States' government. I talked to another history teacher, and he wasn't interested. You probably know who it is. I guess it wasn't until Mr. Smith came that I got any response at all for putting in a subject.

M: This is superintendent Smith?

L: Yes, Paul Smith. He was very innovative. If you tell him something that he thinks to be innovative, he's very likely to say yes and be very enthusiastic about it. Especially about government, he was very interested in that. I finally got around to persuade him to try it next year. I didn't know anything about teaching POD. I don't know why I had the gall to even suggest this, but I did, and he said yes. I think we put that in in the year 1960-1961. We had one class. We had a book, which I had chosen. It turned out to be very difficult to teach from and it was boring to the students. It was a small class, I don't think it had more than twenty in it, but it was an elective, the kids who were interested. When I found I couldn't teach from the book, I used my imagination. There was a great deal of concern at that time about funny books. Do you know when they printed so many of those cartoons, Superman, and whole lot of those things?

M: Yes.

L: Well, a lot of those books, we were talking about the freedom of the press. Some of those books, I thought, were very damaging to the young people. I presented that to the class; I asked them about it. I was amazed at their response. Now, these all had to be pretty good students to take this new, unknown course. Some of them said that they had small brothers and sisters who read nothing but funny books. They thought something should be done about it, the violence, the shooting, and the murder, and all that in those books. We developed a unit on that. They loved it because they were allowed to bring funny books to class, and also to read them in study halls because that was their assignment. Believe me, I had to do some explaining about that before they were allowed to do that. (Laughter) It was marvelous, the things that the kids found about articles in magazines and newspapers they brought in. I didn't know those articles were written, but they would bring them in. Somebody found a book written by some author, I don't even remember who it was, and he was trying to show how it did affect young people. He thought that many of the juveniles who were in trouble were trying to imitate their heroes in the funny books, which I think is quite true. We had a great time doing that. We went from there to read things that were more informal and closer to the kids. That was

just the first year.

Eventually, I had a full day's work in POD, another book. It became required instead of an elective. The first semester was spent on the United States government before we could talk about its problems. Again, I had a book, somehow or another the books were not what I had wanted. I wanted things that were more closely related to this specific time, so I made up my own syllabus, finally. For several years, we concentrated on, studied, communism. We studied about communism, the war in Vietnam, we did a lot of research on that, and civil rights, especially in relation to the blacks. I think we called that civil rights, but we also had another, what do they call it, minority groups, other minority groups. We had to get our own materials ourselves. We could find it in books, but not in one book. I sent kids to the library to research that, and I brought in lots and lots of magazines. We did not study in class, because I had to teach the material right there. I'd let them study, and then we would have reports and then discussions.

M: This was open only to seniors?

L: Yes, seniors, and it was required.

M: I understand that you said the last few years you taught only POD? No more . . .

L: From, let's see, I think maybe from 1962 we had a full class, that many signed up. I think, I don't know how many periods we had then, seven periods, and I probably had six periods of POD.

M: No more American history?

L: No, I didn't teach American history then. Mr. . . . you know.

M: Fain?

L: Yes, he taught American history, and somebody else did too. Well, whoever it was, I don't remember now. You know, that class brought a lot of repercussions. Some parents didn't like the idea of their kids being exposed to communism, that's the way they put it. Some of them didn't like the idea that their children were coming home feeling friendly to Negroes. That really hurt some people. See them talking together. The fact that they did learn that, shows you . . . I always asked for an evaluation at the end of the

year, and so many that were white would say, "I didn't like Negroes when I first came into this class, but I think I understand them better now," or something like that. That's what you're working for. It was a little hard to keep them from making judgments. I thought, and I may be wrong in this, but I thought they were too young to make their own judgments, at that age. Because they had done so much research and we had discussed so much they liked to think they knew it all, I think. I would have to tell them to keep their minds off of it until they were at least 21. That was pretty fun too, big discussions, big fights, disagreements. It was good. You would be surprised how narrow-minded some families are in this town.

I remember one of the very best things that I remember from that was when we were studying about freedom of speech or freedom of the press, one or the other. One of the kids thought it was all right for the government to censor newspapers. I very often had to be a devil's advocate. In this one class, especially, I had to take the opposite side whether I wanted to or not. I was trying to build up a case and they were very much opposed to what I had to say. I was so concerned that I met the Dean of Authorities in the hall, after I had left class. I said, "These kids think that it's all right for the government to censor. How in the heck am I going to get through to them that you can't have that in a democracy?" He said, "Well, take their freedoms away from them, see how they like it." The next day, I asked the question and somebody answered . . .

- M: Surely, in that kind of open-ended classroom and the chance to practically bring anything up for discussion, students feeling that they were free to ask questions and make comments perhaps more so than in a regular classroom, are there any other major topics that came up that you recall, in you POD class?
- L: Yes, the elections and campaigns, we studied about them too. This would be a marvelous year to study about them. At that time, even then they were a little mistrustful of the government. I was always the one who had to stand up for the United States' government. They were criticizing, and some of them were right, too. I think that they were repeating, very often, what they heard their parents say. They were very interested in elections and we always had a mock election, and voting. Is this the year that you were here?
- M: It was a history class, through the history class.

L: We got into quite a complicated one where we had register books, the kids had to sign their names and they came to vote. We tried to carry it out as nearly as we could to the way of an actual election. They liked that very much.

They enjoyed studying about propoganda. It was fun to have them bring things in and try to decide whether articles from newspapers and magazines were propoganda or honest information. A few of those were tough, you didn't know. That was very interesting. They were interested in that.

Minority, when we were studying minority groups, for several years we had some black people that came and talked to us. They encouraged them to ask questions, very personal questions. That was marvelous, we got a good response to those boys.

I remember when we were, in the 1970's, the organization of the political parties on the state level. Mrs. "Republican" is very good at that. I've heard her give a lecture on that and I thought it would be great. She had a flow chart with some stuff on it and she was very good. She said yes, she would come up and talk to my class. Now this was only about the organization of the party. That night, the night before we were going to do that, I got a telephone call from Mr. Smith. He said, "Hello, this is Paul Smith, what time do you start teaching at?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I just got a call from the mayor and that's what he asked me. The only person I could think of who was teaching that up at school was you." I had the mayor's daughter in my class, and the mayor and Mrs. "Republican" didn't see eye to eye. He was very authoricratic; he was very Republican. I said, "All right, I'll call the mayor." I did, and I told him what we were going to do. He said, "I don't trust that woman." I said, "All right, come and visit her." He said, "I'll do just that, I'll just do that." He spent all morning listening to Lisa. It was a scream because there was nothing to it, it was just the organization, nothing controversial. Lisa was criticizing at the organization and she was saying, "Am I right, Gene?" He would say, "Right, Lisa." Pretty soon she would bring up another criticism. "Am I right, Gene?" "Right, Lisa." The kids were just laughing, it was the funniest thing.

M: Good experiance for the kids?

L: Yes.

M: Two enemies end up being friends.

L: That's right. I guess that is it.

M: You mentioned an instance with freedom of the mail.

L: Yes, a boy in the class, when we were studying about communism, said that he would like some specific information from Russia, because for all he knew it was propaganda what we were learning. He thought he would like to write to the Russian Embassy to see if he could get some information. I encouraged him to do it. He did, and they sent us back some stuff on propaganda. It was very helpful. He came in a few weeks later very much upset. He said a friend of his had told him that his name was on a black list, and he would never be able to get a government job, or maybe any other kind of job. When he told me about it, we talked about it in class. I was hot, I thought, well certainly no such thing could happen in our democracy. The kids were on his side, they thought that such a thing could happen. Maybe I was naive. I finally said, "Whose word will you take as final judgment?" It ended up as J. Edgar Hoover. I said, "Okay, I'll talk to him about this." My son-in-law worked in Washington, for the government, so I asked him how to proceed. It happened that he had a friend who was in Hoover's office. He called him. He sent the letter that I had written to him, my son-in-law, stating the problem to that man. He told him to tell me to copy the letter word for word, it was very informal, and send it to J. Edgar Hoover. He was sure that that would be the kind of letter his secretary would not throw away. Sure enough, I got a letter from Mr. Hoover. It said, talking about how a letter is protected by law, no tampering, and I don't know, do you want me to read it?

M: Well, whatever eventually ended up in the classroom in response to this boy being so upset?

L: Letter from J. Edgar Hoover:

I want to assure you that our regulations strictly prohibit any FBI employee from tampering with, interfering with, or opening mail in violation of the law. I would also like to point out that the FBI does not grant or deny currency for government or private employment. In those situations where we do conduct a background investigation at the request of a government agency, our reports are forwarded to them without comment or recommendation of any kind by this bureau. It is the responsibility of that agency to make the decision.

That was it. They accepted that. Any day, now, you can read in the paper about the FBI tampering with the mail and having done it for years and years. Here in 1963 they accepted this as gospel truth because it came from J. Edgar Hoover.

- M: The letter was signed by Hoover?
- L: Right there. That's his signature.
- M: Now you wonder if you led the class astray?
- L: I certainly do. I wonder how many other times I led the class astray. I was led astray too.
- M: Mrs. Loop, you put a good many years into the Salem High School operation, Salem city school system: yearbook advisor, biweekly advisor, history teacher, POD teacher, a lot of experience in a lot of different areas, not just strictly limited to the classroom-out-of-the-door type, like so many other teachers. Do you have some final thoughts about your teaching experience in the Salem city schools?
- L: I've been thinking a lot about that since I retired. I didn't want to retire, I was still enjoying teaching. I think those were probably the happiest years of my life, when I was teaching. I like young people and I feel useful. As I look back, I wonder about how many times I did lead them astray. I didn't know everything, sometimes I thought I did. You always have to finally realize that you don't know everything. Do you want me to comment on the schools, or on teaching in general?
- M: Well, just any topic of yours, it makes no difference what areas you touch on, with regard to your last year or last few years of teaching.
- L: My last year was so good, it was very, very good. As I told you before, if it hadn't been for illness in the family I would not have retired at that time. But, as I look back now, and as I see students and hear them talk now I wonder if I would enjoy teaching as much. I think they have changed and are harder to handle. It's not all bad, they're inquisitive, they're more willing to criticize teaching than they used to be. They want honest answers. I think they want honest answers. Sometimes it's difficult to give them that. Now, they're more independent, I think, than they used to be. I bet they never light the candle anymore. I'm certainly not going back to substituting, that is really pretty hard.

M: Why do you say that?

L: As soon as the substitute comes into a room, she is subjected to all the tricks. You know, you were there, Jim, you were substituting. They want to see what they can get away with with the substitute. I don't know why they're like that.

M: Have you talked to people in the community that do substituting in the school?

L: Yes, I do. They find it very difficult. Not all of them. I suppose the personality and the way they handle the class still has a lot to do with it. What if I might have to go back? No, I'm never going back to teaching again. I don't want to spoil very, very happy memories. I was with those children. Maybe I just haven't been close enough to young people for a while, to really understand them. Still, they kind of frighten me. I don't think they're all bad either. When I hear of them smoking marijuana, drinking, things like that, it frightens me. I wouldn't want to have to cope with things like that.

M: You mentioned two words, 'Happy memories', perhaps that might be a good place to finish up. With one final statement, that is, it is very important that I thank you for your time.

L: Well, thank you. I'm glad I could be of help.

END OF INTERVIEW