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Interview with Leroy Moos

Peggy Golden

Fort Hays State University

LeRoy Moos

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CHAPTER II
ORAL INTERVIEW

Peggy: To begin this interview, LeRoy, why don't you tell me a little about yourself.

LeRoy: My name is LeRoy Moos. I'm currently 54 years old. I went to grade school and high school in Grinnell, Kansas. My folks moved there before I started school. I was born in Thomas County near Menlo. The school is no longer there, the town either for that matter. I went to college in Colorado, the Colorado State College of Education which became Colorado State College, which became the University of Northern Colorado. So we've gone through some traditions and some transitions there, too. I have taught 32 years. I taught in Gove, Kansas, also in a school south of there known as Missouri Flats School, and later on I went to what is now USD #274 in Oakley-Monument.

Peggy: Missouri Flats is the one-room school we'll be discussing, right?

LeRoy: Yes, that would be right.

Peggy: Do you know when the schoolhouse was built?

LeRoy: As I recall, it was built close to World War II. It was a period of time when some rural districts

were consolidating and several districts went together to maintain a school out there. It wasn't under the present unification, but there was a time when small school districts were consolidated. This was one area that did that. They built what was to become the Missouri Flats School.

Peggy: Do you know by whom it was built?

LeRoy: I'm sure it was built by a contractor, but I can't tell you who it was. It was done, a lot of it I'm sure, with the aid of local workmen.

Peggy: Was there a significance in the school name?

LeRoy: Yes, I think it was given that name because the ancestors of the people who lived there had come from the Missouri and Arkansas area. A lot of them could trace their ancestors back to there. To those people it was basically flat country. I assume that others just gave it that name.

Peggy: What materials were used to build this school?

LeRoy: This building would be in what you'd call the 'modern era,' so it was a brick building. Quite a bit of it was made with glass block, so it was considered to be one of the more modern buildings as far as small rural schools went.

Peggy: Ok.

- LeRoy: There was a school near there named Jerome which had been there for many years. It was the old, typical, white, one-room, wood, clapboard siding building. Missouri Flats was a more progressive building.
- Peggy: So, were the materials for it local?
- LeRoy: No, I wouldn't call them local. I think they were all imported. No native wood or anything like that was used. It was commercially produced.
- Peggy: Was Missouri Flats a public school?
- LeRoy: Yes. It was a common school district. In those days, schools did not maintain grades K through twelve or one through twelve, so this was what was a common elementary school district at that time. It did not maintain a high school or any grades other than K through, or one through eight.
- Peggy: So if this was built post-World War II, then it had good heating, lighting and...
- LeRoy: There was no town as such close by, and they tried to make it about as modern as they could in those days. In fact, it had quite an adequate hot water heating system fueled by propane which was a new and coming thing in those days for this territory. Coal was on its way out. They tried to heat it in

what would be a very modern way. As I recall, it was a very comfortable building. Water was obtained by a pressure system that had to be pumped about half a mile, because you did not find water in that territory at any place you drilled. You had to take the water to the site that you wanted it. The water itself was classified as very hard water, but it was adequate for the purposes. The building had a septic tank system. It did not have outhouses, because many of the rural buildings in that period of time had been converted whenever possible. This one--having been built from scratch--didn't have to have converted rooms added to it. There were some that I remember working with that did.

Peggy: Would you describe the outside of the school for me?

LeRoy: The outside was basically an A-shaped pitched roof, rather a steep pitch as I remember. It was similar to many city schools built in that period of time. Some of them, of course, are still being used as town schools. It would not draw undue attention from the travelers as they went by, because it wouldn't be considered unique.

Peggy: Who was in charge of the upkeep?

LeRoy: Basically the board of education and the individual members on the board had to handle any major problems. If something went wrong with the water system, or something like that, very quickly I'd call them. Then they would drop their own work, and come up and help straighten it out. Frequently, if it was something that happened over the weekend, I wound up having to fix it, such as, why the pipes didn't work, or something of that nature. Since rural electrification had come in, it was modern enough that it had electricity. You usually had to figure out why something didn't work if it went wrong. Servicemen were 30 or 40 and 50 miles away, and they didn't really call them out unless it was major.

Peggy: What physical changes occurred to the schoolhouse during the years you were there?

LeRoy: As I recall, there were no physical changes. Except in 1964 a tornado tried to move things around. But it didn't actually do any major structural damage to the building. The building stayed very much the same.

Peggy: Were there any changes made after you left?

LeRoy: To my knowledge, no, the building basically stayed the same. As for inside rearrangement or redecorating, I have no idea.

Peggy: Were there any physical problems with the building? Things you maybe didn't like or would have changed if you could have?

LeRoy: I probably wouldn't have had as much construction with the glass block. They were excellent as far as light for plants and science experiments involving light, but they were a heat problem. As time went on the masonry became weak, and they also tended to leak in hard rains. There needed to be the regular maintenance, and repainting was always something that needed to be done.

Peggy: What happened to the school building itself?

LeRoy: The building is still maintained as perhaps a small community center, a township building, voting location, and so on. It always had been a voting center and polling place. Sometimes we had school on election day, and sometimes we didn't. Eventually we reached the place where we did not, because it is a little difficult to have school while people are coming in and out and voting. I think it is still maintained as a voting place.

Peggy: What happened to the equipment and supplies when the school did close?

LeRoy: I don't know officially, because I didn't teach there any longer. But, I assume, it was merged into the unified school district that this building belonged to at the time it closed.

Peggy: Do you know why the school was originally built?

LeRoy: Originally the school was built to provide an educational center close to the homes of a lot of the young children who lived there. Mileage was a serious concern, because it was a large area. You had to travel many miles over what was not the best of roads. So it was built to provide an educational center close to the homes of the people who lived in that area.

Peggy: Were there set boundaries?

LeRoy: Yes. It was a recognized school district with recognized boundary lines set by the state of Kansas.

Peggy: Who went there was decided by...

LeRoy: Who went there was usually decided by the fact that you lived within the territorial boundaries of that district. I'm sure if there had been

people wanting to go there from other districts there would have been no problem.

Peggy: Was the schoolhouse used for community social activities as well as for education?

LeRoy: Yes, it was. As I already stated it was used as a polling place, and elections were held there. I can't remember exactly, but I'm sure there were a number of nights when groups would meet there, especially if they didn't choose to meet in a home. I imagine women's groups used it frequently. I don't really recall a lot about it. I imagine EHU groups were there frequently.

Peggy: Are there some traditions that are peculiar to Missouri Flats?

LeRoy: Traditions in what way? Do you mean long-standing back-ground conditions?

Peggy: Yes.

LeRoy: None that I can think of particularly. There were traditional Christmas activities and things of that nature, but none that I can think of that would be a long-standing tradition.

Peggy: Did Missouri Flats have an organization similar to the PTA?

LeRoy: No. As I recall there was no such organization. If you needed or wanted something, it wasn't too difficult to have somebody in the community say "Yes, we'll get together." Then somebody would call a few more of the neighbors, and they would take care of a function or an activity. They helped when we needed some treats for any occasions, or if we had business planned and wanted to have refreshments. The area people were rather strong for volunteering for school purposes.

Peggy: Were there any activities that took place between schools--between Missouri Flats and other area schools?

LeRoy: No, not really. We were pretty much an entity unto ourselves. We didn't participate a lot in inter-scholastic activities of any kind. We often went on an end of the year field day type situation, or a picnic somewhere, if we didn't happen to have a carry-in dinner at the schoolhouse. But there really wasn't much. Toward the end of the time I taught there, there was a little bit of coordination between that school and the school district that we were going

to become a part of. This was done generally as a P.R. to help smooth over the transition from being a single entity to a subdivision of a major school district.

Peggy: Did Missouri Flats make any lasting contributions to the community?

LeRoy: I suppose there were contributions that they made to the community that involved the fact that there's a high education rate for its graduates. They've done well for themselves throughout the world. They've not stayed local. A lot of them have gone all over the United States and other places. They have done well for themselves. I think that would be the most lasting contribution, you might say.

Peggy: Why did the school close?

LeRoy: Basically I think the school closed when the school-age population in that area got to the point that it was so low that the state wouldn't recognize it as a school any longer.

Peggy: Do you know when it closed?

LeRoy: I remember going down when I got a notice. At the time they closed, they invited teachers and former teachers to come back for a Last Day of School

Picnic. I remember going back for that, and I was disappointed that I didn't see as many of the people there as I expected to see. But I can't remember the exact year. I think it was somewhere probably in the mid-70's.

Peggy: How many students went to the school?

LeRoy: The student population when I got there was in the neighborhood of twenty-eight. Before I left there, it had dropped considerably. The older children graduated, and the young ones weren't there to take their places. Like small populations in that area, it went through a cycle. The children that were graduating were not old enough to marry and come back to establish the school population over again. So it dropped considerably and eventually was why it was closed.

Peggy: What was the usual age of the child that began school there?

LeRoy: Pretty much the same as it is now days. Six years old and in the first grade was a pretty normal situation.

Peggy: So they didn't have kindergarten?

LeRoy: This school did not have kindergarten.

Peggy: What grade levels were taught?

LeRoy: The plan for the school was grades one through eight. It had grades one through eight except when there might be a class that wouldn't have any students in it. This did happen occasionally.

Peggy: Did you have very many children that moved in and out of the school during the year? Were there a lot of transient children?

LeRoy: Basically the population of that area was very stable. There were some transfers as people would move in to get new jobs on the ranches and farms, but generally the population was fairly stable.

Peggy: How did most of the children get to school?

LeRoy: Transportation was by private vehicle, the family's own vehicle. There were no school-provided vehicles of any kind. If they were close enough, they walked. Those who didn't live close, their parents dropped them off, and they usually came by car. Occasionally you had a child ride his horse, but it was more as a novelty than a dependable means of transportation.

Peggy: What was the greatest distance that was traveled by one of the students?

LeRoy: I'd estimate that to be in the neighborhood of fifteen miles.

- Peggy: How did he get there? Was it also by car?
- LeRoy: Yes. Also by car.
- Peggy: What kind of occupations did the students usually take up?
- LeRoy: When they left school?
- Peggy: Yes.
- LeRoy: These students, since they were in a non-high school district, went to many different high schools. After high school, a high percentage of them went on to college. Those who didn't became engaged in ranch or farm work. Some of them have become pharmacists, medical doctors, lawyers, or social workers. A good percentage of them are in feedlot management, or actually working as ranch hands and managers.
- Peggy: So most of the children, then, did go on to college?
- LeRoy: Considering the population, a high percentage of those children went on through high school. A very high percentage went to college. I don't know the exact number, but I'm sure it would be quite high considering the total population of the school.

Peggy: Were there any outstanding students? You mentioned pharmacists and doctors.

LeRoy: Yes. As I mentioned, they went to three different high schools because of where their families lived. One was a valedictorian of a high school in one class, and a classmate was third from the top. She was beat out by another student who happened to come from a one teacher school also. Another one of the students was valedictorian in a different high school, and her classmate was salutatorian. And in the third school another one was among the top, but I don't know for sure that she was exactly the valedictorian. That particular group had some very sharp students in it. They were fun to work with and very studious when they went on.

Peggy: What was the cost of the educational system for the families at Missouri Flats?

LeRoy: Like most of the more modern schools it was tax supported by a levy issued by the school board. It was levied through the school district, so direct tuition or charges were nonexistent. Book purchases were common by individual families. There was a lot of swapping and trading to help

cut costs. I would imagine that considering the costs and the number of students there, the cost per pupil ratio was probably rather high. They tried hard to maintain as much modern-type equipment as they could. Therefore the cost doesn't spread over a lot of students, so the per pupil cost was probably rather high.

Peggy: Did the students of Missouri Flats come from a particular cultural or heritage background?

LeRoy: No. I wouldn't particularly think so. I think a lot of them probably had English ancestry. I know of some cases where they were French, and Indian in one particular family. It was pretty much a cross-section of people who might have come from the general area.

Peggy: Was the dress and overall appearance of the students really anything different from now?

LeRoy: No, I wouldn't think so. The method of clothing was appropriate for what was normal for those times. There was a predominance of boys who did wear cowboy boots rather than other types of shoes worn in other schools in those days. This apparently traced itself back to the fact that this was ranch country, and horses were ridden frequently. Families just bought boots instead of

other shoes. Tennis shoes weren't the fad, and sneakers weren't common then. I'm sure that if students were there today, they'd be wearing sneakers like everybody else.

Peggy: What was the length of the school day and the school year?

LeRoy: The school day was 8:30 to 4:00 or 5:00, maybe 3:30. I don't remember exactly. I have had so many schedule changes since then! But when I did start, it was a 160 day term. It was an eight month school. It continued as an eight month school until the state made 180 days mandatory. So one year we had to automatically extend school another month in order to remain eligible for what aid was available in those days.

Peggy: What subjects were taught?

LeRoy: About everything, except music wasn't very good. We had reading, science, math, social studies, and language arts. Whenever possible we tried to work art classes and projects in, but they were not on a regular basis.

Peggy: So you taught your own music, P.E., art...

LeRoy: I taught everything that was taught there. Now music, as I said, was not regularly taught. I tried to use small musical instruments to help

teach something about reading music and reading scales. When we decided to have Christmas programs or some special activity, some of the neighborhood ladies--who had in previous years been teachers in the community--would give us assistance whenever they could.

Peggy: What teaching aids were available to you? What kind of equipment did you have?

LeRoy: Considering the fact that it was a one room school, we were pretty well equipped. As I said before, they made a sincere effort to provide as much aid as they could for a teacher. So we had some relatively modern equipment in those days. A filmstrip projector, for one. I remember we had a tape recorder or two which came in quite handy. I would record something for one group of children to work with while I worked with something with another group. So we were somewhat modern in that respect.

Peggy: So you did work with different classes at different times?

LeRoy: Oh, yes. I had multiple classes within different grades. I had to juggle my time very closely. If I spent extra time with one class on one subject, I robbed time from some other class and another

subject. Sometimes it paid off, because while the children would wait and watch what I was doing, they were learning how to do something for when I taught them in later years. They seemed to have some knowledge of it, because they paid attention to what the others were doing.

Peggy: Were any special classes offered or any educational services?

LeRoy: No. Special Ed classes, special service classes, and special reading classes, and things of that nature were nonexistent. If you had a need for a special class of any type you just made it yours and did it yourself.

Peggy: What was the atmosphere at the school? Was it strict?

LeRoy: Basically, it was whatever you as an individual created. You set the policy, you set the rules, you set the discipline standards. It wasn't dictated by some policy, an administrator, or by consultation with public teachers. There weren't any. So you set your own policy. At times you could bend some rules because the children knew you were going to bend them--even though we normally didn't do it that way.

Peggy: What were some rules of the school that might have been different from today?

LeRoy: Because there was a small number of students, and since they were mostly family members, you didn't have to have such hard and fast outlines of rules. They usually didn't have as much to try either. Somebody wasn't usually trying something just to see if they could get away with it--like they sometimes do now. So the discipline or rules that they had to follow were rather limited, I think. You didn't need a lot of ground rules to go by. There weren't a lot of different things to get into.

Peggy: Would you describe a typical school day for us?

LeRoy: Well, usually you tried to work through a subject with your older students, get them started on independent work, and then work your way down through the grades. Sometimes I'd work with the little children and then go on up to the bigger children. More frequently though it was easier to start with the older students. If they got their assignments done, I would use them as aids to help with the younger ones if they needed help. I have tried it both ways. You generally went through

the subject and grade, then switched to another subject and grade, until you got yourself through the day.

Peggy: How were textbooks decided on?

LeRoy: Well, since you were the total staff, you were the curriculum director, the coordinator, the book committee, everything. So generally the textbooks were what you chose. We chose them by first talking to the county superintendent to see if anybody had sent him sample copies. Then we'd look over those books. We very frequently visited book and curriculum fairs when we went to state teacher's meeting. It was possible to sometimes order sample kits and demonstration copies. We'd look over several of those and then just choose which one we thought we'd need to upgrade or replace what we had. We had a lot of leeway in that way.

Peggy: Did Missouri Flats have a library?

LeRoy: No. I wouldn't say we had a library as such. We had what you might call room collections of books. They ran to various subjects and reading levels. There was a rather broad assortment considering the limited financial conditions. TV was not a thing to be considered so books got a lot of

priority. People spent a lot of time reading. We had a fairly extensive room collection rather than a formalized library.

Peggy: Where did the books come from? Were they donated by the parents? Did the school buy them? Or were they yours?

LeRoy: All three. Some of the books I had in my home, I took over. Student book clubs were getting to be common, and so children frequently bought from these book orders. They're pretty common today, but at that time they weren't that common.

Peggy: What were some of the special observances that were held there? I'm sure you had the usual Christmas programs, spelling bees...

LeRoy: Yes, we had a spelling bee, because at that time there was a county spelling contest, so we would have a spelling contest. The children did real well in the county competition competing against town school students. It was more of a challenge for them because they didn't have as many ways to divide their time. They did well in things that way. They weren't sidetracked by the activities the town children would be involved in. Sometimes we'd do special projects for holidays, such as

Mother's Day gifts or something of that nature. That way we could combine a little bit of art and craft activities. So we did have special things, but no homecoming and spirit week and things that we have now days in schools.

Peggy: Did you use competency tests for promotion?

LeRoy: No. We didn't have to be involved in any kind of state motivated tests. Basically, if I felt the student had accomplished the work and could handle the next grade, he was promoted. I made the sole choice. No consultation was needed, except for talking it over with parents. Then we would make a joint decision as to whether or not we should keep a student in a grade or send him on. When you worked one-on-one all the time and had students for more than one year, you could tell pretty easily who was going to have a weakness in a subject. So you already knew from the beginning of the year what you were going to have to do for a particular student. There were no fixed formal guidelines for promotion from some other place--just our own.

Peggy: Did Missouri Flats have graduation exercises?

LeRoy: The school didn't have any graduation exercises of its own. The students were frequently invited to

participate in graduation exercises with children in Gove. Then later on, when unification became imminent, they were invited to participate with the Quinter students. That's where the later graduations were held. This also helped improve relationships by kind of a public relations means.

Peggy: We've discussed how far the students had to go to get to school. Where did you live while you taught there?

LeRoy: In order to get teachers to teach out there, which was basically out by itself, the district had decided to provide a place to live. People out there had built their own homes, and rental property wasn't available. They made arrangements to provide a trailer very close to school, and that's where I lived. It was quite convenient. Sometimes if I forgot something I could just run over to the school and get it. It also meant you were available at all times.

Peggy: How much schooling did you have in order to teach? How much did they require?

LeRoy: Basically, all that the school administration required was that I have a Kansas teaching certificate. At that time a teaching certificate could be gotten before completing college. That

was my case. So I would teach on a one year provisional certificate, go to summer school, get more hours toward a degree which would in turn renew the certificate. By doing this continually, I eventually obtained a college degree.

Peggy: How many years did you actually teach there before you finished your schooling?

LeRoy: Well, from the time I first started teaching until the time I actually acquired my Bachelor's degree, with some time out for military service, was twelve years.

Peggy: Really?

LeRoy: Yes. When you only go one quarter of a year, it takes a while.

Peggy: That's really interesting! Now would you describe a typical day before and after school?

LeRoy: There really were no before school activities that were involved at school. I was usually over at the school at about the same time the students got there. There was some visiting or socialization until such time as I would say, "Ok, let's start class." In the interest of running a good school and managing it, you used the clock and made it start the same time. I had a fixed schedule that was followed. There were not a lot of pre-school

duties that had to be accomplished before class started. After school the students went straight home. Any kind of after school activities were carried out by the parents who said, "Here's your chores. Get them done."--or whatever they found for themselves to do if they didn't have jobs to do. There weren't any after school activities at all that I had to participate in. The usual activities after school involved grading papers, and school work that had to be done for the next day.

Peggy: Did you have any special services that you had to do during the day? Were you required to do the cleaning, lunches, or anything like that?

LeRoy: Officially, no. But sometimes you inherited jobs that had to be done, because there was nobody else there to do them. If the duplicator didn't work properly, you repaired it yourself. If something went wrong with the pump, you sometimes had to go down and try to figure out what was wrong. REA was bringing electricity in, so we were fortunate to have current--which was a definite advantage. You were the official fuse changer and lightbulb switcher for jobs of this nature. Jobs that came up as they happened.

Peggy: What about the lunch program?

LeRoy: Lunch programs were a relatively new thing then. This school tried to have a lunch program, so they made provisions for it. There was a lady that came and cooked the meals. She also did some of the sweeping. She drove about twenty miles from her home to school. She did it every day and took care of preparing the lunch. The lunch program was such that it was common practice to buy a ticket. You paid for the school lunches by the year. There was a flat fee for every student. If you were absent, you still paid the same fee. There were no lunch tickets that were punched. If you missed the day, you were still charged for the day. They had to do this in order to have enough funds to maintain the lunch program. So the people just accepted it. If a lunch program was wanted--you paid a certain number of dollars per month. I don't remember now what it was. That was the fee that was charged whether the child was there that day or not. You got no credits or discounts for absentees. You just paid the flat fee.

Peggy: Did you have to pay for the lunch, or was it just a part of...

- LeRoy: Each person paid for their own lunches, and teachers paid for their own lunches. They were not provided as a fringe benefit or anything.
- Peggy: Did any of the children bring their own lunches?
- LeRoy: The common practice there was that nobody brought their lunches. It was just custom that you ate what was there. It may not be your favorite food, but you ate it anyway. There were no picky eaters as such, because it was a common practice that you ate there. You ate what was served. Generally speaking, I think they were good meals, but they really couldn't afford to be cafeteria variety. There was a set menu, and that's what the menu was. You ate it.
- Peggy: Switching to the teaching ways, how were they different than what you use now?
- LeRoy: Well, in a lot of ways, there's a lot of things that are the same. There are certain things that are going to be rather consistent no matter where you teach. When you run into new ideas, you try them out. You were always looking for new ideas. When you were there by yourself, you spread your time so thin, you looked for new ways to make things go faster. Grouping wasn't quite like it

is today, because to a certain extent you didn't have that many people to group. There was a lot more of what you call one-to-one. I suppose if you called the older ones helping the little ones class-peer tutoring or class-age-peer tutoring, we had a pretty good percentage of that. So, a lot of the techniques we use now, we used then.

Peggy: How were discipline problems with the children handled? Were the parents involved, or did you just handle it yourself?

LeRoy: Parents would always be involved if you had any discipline problems. Generally speaking, with the small number of students--who were related to each other--you knew that news about what happened would get home. There really wasn't a whole lot of discipline problems. You handled what you had to when it came up. You didn't really have a lot of problems with somebody saying what you could do or couldn't do with your students. They just expected the children to walk the straight and narrow, and generally speaking, they did. I didn't feel that discipline there was really any major problem.

Peggy: How were teachers expected to conduct themselves in the community?

LeRoy: In that particular community I don't think the teachers were expected to conduct themselves any differently than the general population of the community did. Now, as I said, it was an isolated area. Anybody would have to go great distances to take in entertainment of some type. There really wasn't much socialization or many situations that would cause you to get into something that was frowned upon by the community. If they wanted to go for some entertainment of some kind they did. Most of them--for their church services--usually drove in the neighborhood of ten or twenty miles or more. Some, I can remember, drove a distance of probably fifty miles to attend a church of their choice. So, going somewhere was what you did as a matter of course. Entertainment and conduct of any individual was not particularly controlled there, because when you were there you worked and did your thing. When you went somewhere else, you did it the way you wanted to.

Peggy: What happened when you were sick or had to go to a meeting during a school day?

LeRoy: There just wasn't much in the way of meetings during the school day. If you were gone, somebody had to come in and substitute. If you were sick, someone had to substitute for you. It was usually one of the neighborhood ladies who had had some experience in her youth as a teacher, or if she was interested enough in education and learning that she would be willing to do it while you were gone. You had to have quite a bit down as far as lesson plans might be, so they would know what you were after, and what you wanted done. They followed textbook topics pretty closely. Oftentimes, I remember, if you weren't real sick, you could stay with the children and give them some guidance on what to do. They'd often go on their own much more so than large groups of common age children do now days. When you were sick, you were just absent, and somebody in the community filled in for you. There was no formal sub that was sought.

Peggy: Did you have a principal for the school?

LeRoy: No. In a school of this size, you were the principal, the teacher, everything that there was. As such, there was no principal. No. You were more or less under the supervision of the board of education who did the hiring and financial arrangements--bookkeeping of the district, and so

on. Any decisions that had to be made about planning, you usually did yourself. You didn't have to check with the principal or get consent from somebody before you did anything. If you decided you wanted to take the students outside and look at something, you just did it. You didn't have to worry about whether or not somebody wanted to know if you had left the building or not.

Peggy: You said that the school board hired the teachers. Did anybody else have input? Or was it just up to the school board?

LeRoy: No. Generally when a school needed a teacher, the board of education would put out notices that they were looking for a teacher. They would interview the applicant when they found one they liked. It was a three member board in those days, by the way. They would offer a contract, and if you agreed to the terms of the contract, that's all there was to it. And I suppose in case of problems, if they disagreed with the way you taught school, they would be the same people that gave you your dismissal notice.

Peggy: Was there a problem with teacher turnover?

LeRoy: In this particular school that I was in, I stayed nine years. I think the person that was there

ahead of me had probably stayed fifteen or more. I don't think there was a high turnover in that particular area, although I know of some where there were.

Peggy: And do you know what evaluation system was used for the teachers?

LeRoy: Basically, if the people of the community felt that the children were learning something, they could get along with you, and the students could get along with you, they didn't complain to the school board. If they didn't complain to the school board, you stayed employed.

Peggy: So, nobody came in and officially observed like they do now?

LeRoy: No. At times, you know, people of the school board used to come and sit in on classes, but then now days you have administrators who do that. In that particular location they didn't. Any observation by the school board would probably have been done incidentally when they popped in for some reason or another. They saw what was going on, took care of the business at hand, and left. Generally, school board member's children were in the classroom, so they probably had as

much evaluation by what their children said when they got home as they do now.

Peggy: I want to switch a little bit here and go in a different direction. The land that the school was on--was it purchased or given to the school?

LeRoy: My understanding was that when several smaller local districts merged to form that district, the land was donated by a landowner with the stipulation that it would be the property of the school, so long as school was held in that location. I understand that according to the title, it could have reverted back to the original piece of ground if school ever stopped. Since the building hasn't been removed, and they still use it as a community center, I don't think the landowners that have it now--two generations down in the same family, by the way--have exercised that option in the original agreement. It's still used as a community center and has not reverted back, even though the original title said that as long as school was held there, it belonged to the school.

Peggy: Was that ever brought up when they decided to close the school?

LeRoy: I don't know. I wasn't in the community at the time. I don't think so. I doubt it myself.

Peggy: Where did the plans for the construction of the school come from?

LeRoy: The school was constructed when I got there. I have no idea, but I'm sure it was by local mill levy.

Peggy: So the community helped through the taxes?

LeRoy: Oh, very certainly, I'm sure.

Peggy: How much did it cost a student to enroll at Missouri Flats?

LeRoy: Enrollment was free public education. The only fee you had to pay at that time was something for books, and when you bought your meal tickets. So the only fees they paid were the acquisition of their books, plus whatever you paid for meals. This was usually purchased from the neighbors whose children had passed that grade or some local vendor who made it a policy to stock schoolbooks.

Peggy: What was your salary when you first started at Missouri Flats?

LeRoy: When I first started, my salary was twenty-seven hundred. My first year at Missouri Flats was four thousand two hundred with the clause that they

would provide me a place to live. There was nothing out there in the way of rental property, and it would be quite a problem to drive considering the weather, etcetera. The arrangement that was made was that they would provide a place to stay--which they did.

Peggy: And how about your last year?

LeRoy: The last year I was there I got six thousand six hundred and fifty. This particular district was thought to be rather progressive, and that was one of the reasons I went there as opposed to some of the town schools where the salary schedule wasn't quite as good. These people had to pay better to get someone to come out there, and that's what they did.

Peggy: How was the salary determined and by whom?

LeRoy: The salary was determined basically by negotiation between the board of education and the teacher involved. It often was--quote--in line with what other people were paying--end quote. So it was more or less an open negotiation with stipulations that it wasn't going to be a lot more than what other teachers of the area were getting. They had to pay more to get someone, and they did pay to influence him.

- Peggy: How did you get your pay checks? Did you have to go pick them up?
- LeRoy: Hmm. All the finances of the district were handled by the board treasurer--a member of the school board. As I said, it was a three member board--there was the president, the clerk, and the treasurer. The treasurer would make out the checks, the president would have to sign them, and they would deliver them to the school on the way by in their routine work and drop them off. Usually, it was pretty regular, but there were times when he hadn't been by, so you didn't get paid until later. It wasn't as efficient and consistent as it is now. It did vary a lot. The particular man who served as the treasurer while I was there was rather consistent and conscientious about getting it out.
- Peggy: Well, I think I'm done, LeRoy. Is there anything else that you can think of that might be of interest? Maybe a special story or event or maybe something I haven't covered, that you'd like to add?
- LeRoy: Probably the most special event that I will always think of when I think of that school is that we

had a young girl who was born with some physical problems that would cause her to suddenly start hemorrhaging unannounced. She'd had this from birth, and she could almost tell you when something was going to happen. The understanding with her parents was that if we couldn't reach them, we had permission to head for a doctor as fast as we could get there. Sure enough, one day she had a seizure at school, and she started hemorrhaging internally. We couldn't contact her parents, so we took off for a doctor. We called a lady who lived nearby to come and take care of the children while I was absent. Fortunately, we got her to a doctor in time and saved her life. A year or two later, however, she had complications which cost her her life. School was not held the day they had her funeral. It was the typical dirty, miserable day, and that night about eleven o'clock, along with the wind and the dirt, the place where I was staying was victimized by a tornado. I will always remember the cooperation of those people as they came to school the next day and walked for miles finding and picking up anything in the way of my personal items and bringing them back. I lost very little as far as physical property--some dishes were smashed, and others were saved, as tornadoes do. But the courtesy, the helpfulness, and the rebounding ability of these people who snapped back after

what would be basically a double tragedy in one day, will always be remembered.

Peggy: Thank you, LeRoy.