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Interview with Vida Toburen

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Vida Nelson Toburen

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CHAPTER TWO

INTERVIEW OF MRS. VIDA NELSON TOBUREN

GLEN: Today I am interviewing Mrs. Vida Nelson Toburen, from Colby, Kansas the date is June 24, 1990. Mrs. Toburen I would like to get some personal data from you first of all. Would you state your full name?

MRS. TOBUREN: Vida Nelson Toburen.

GLEN: What is your age?

MRS. TOBUREN: Seventy-seven.

GLEN: What schools did you attend as you were growing up?

MRS. TOBUREN: I attended the Nicol School which was District Fifteen in Thomas County.

GLEN: Was that just grade school or did that go through high school?

MRS. TOBUREN: No, that just went through the eighth grade at the rural school. I only went there for four years, my first four years then I moved to Colby.

GLEN: Did you finish high school in Colby?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes, in 1930 I graduated. We will celebrate our 60th anniversary when we have our reunion this year.

GLEN: That's coming up in August?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right!

GLEN: Did you attend college?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes.

teaching thinking I was through. I attended just one year of winter school otherwise it was all summer school. Then I did attend Laramie University and also Pittsburg State for summer school.

GLEN: When you started teaching how much schooling did you have at that time?

MRS. TOBUREN: I had a high school education and I had taken what they called a normal training course, which was preparing seniors for school teaching.

GLEN: What year was that?

MRS. TOBUREN: That was 1930.

GLEN: So the first year you taught was 1930?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right

GLEN: And at what school was that?

MRS. TOBUREN: That was Antelope District Thirty in Thomas County.

GLEN: Where was Antelope located?

MRS. TOBUREN: About five or six miles south of Mingo.

GLEN: So that would have made it about fifteen miles south of Colby.

MRS. TOBUREN: I expect about fifteen or sixteen miles I not sure it has been awhile.

GLEN: Was Antelope a one thru eight school?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: You taught there just one year?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: Then you went over to Olive Branch?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: Where was it located?

MRS. TOBUREN: About twelve mile south of Colby and one west.

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: Where was it located?

MRS. TOBUREN: About twelve miles south of Colby and one west.

GLEN: Was it also a one thru eight school?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: Then your next year was in Otterbourne?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes, I taught in Otterbourne in the fall of 1935 . I was in Olive Branch for three years then I went to Fort Hays for a year.

GLEN: Was Otterbourne a one thru eight school?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes.

GLEN: Then after a year at Otterbourne you took some time off to get married?

MRS. TOBUREN: No, I taught in the Colby Public Schools during 1936-37 then I got married.

GLEN: Ok, then I have down that you taught back at Otterbourne during 1939-41.

MRS. TOBUREN: After we were married we went to Colorado, and we hardly got out there until they changed the requirements for teaching in Colorado. You had to have your degree and I only had what we called a life certificate in Kansas which was the equivalent of a sixty hour certificate and I couldn't teach there, so in order to save my certificate I came back. At that time if you did not teach on your certificate for three years, you would have to go back to school. So, I came back, just visiting, for a one day vacation, and we were talking the situation over, now realize this was during the depression and the dust years, my husband was working for Montgomery Wards

in Boulder. You know, it was a living but barely, and I thought, well, maybe I would come back and teach a year to save my certificate, if I had a school. Someone said, Otterbourne had not hired a teacher, but I said, you suppose they would hire a married woman. So, I called them up, just for the fun of it, to feel what would happen. Did you know, when I taught in the Colby School on the back of our contracts there was a little notation that if you are married this becomes null and void. Married teachers were not allowed in the Colby Public Schools. So, at that time most of the teachers were single and primarily ladies. So, I called up the school board and I said, I understand you have not hired a teacher, would you hire a married woman? They said, it depends upon who it is, and I told them who I was, but that I was just going to be here one year. Are you moving back here? I thought maybe, I would come back to teach to save my certificate, but it is just a thought. Before I left two members of the school board had come to my parents home to trying to get me to take the school. So there I was, didn't even think of teaching, and they were asking me to come back to teach at their school. I said, oh dear, I would have to think about this. So I went home and thought for two weeks, and decided maybe it was the thing to do. Then my husband and I moved back here after one year, and he started farming. So it was kind of a funny situation, but at least I saved my certificate. Then I taught for two years. At that time I had one little boy, my oldest son was born, and times were hard GLEN: One year at Otterbourne and then--

MRS. TOBUREN: No I taught two years at Otterbourne at that time. I taught in 39-41. Then, I decided since it was down in a creek, and in

the winter time, it was kind of hard to get there over the hills and hollows, I would apply for Center school right south of Colby because it would be level. We lived about four miles northeast on my father's farm, and it was just straight with no hills or anything coming through Colby. That was the last year that I taught in the rural school, which made eight years all together. So, a total of eight years in rural schools.

GLEN: I did not ask you, but where was Otterbourne located?

MRS. TOBUREN: It about seven miles north and two east of Colby. You see at one time there was a post office at Otterbourne and they laid out a plan for a town. There is quite a history of that area. If you look up Miss Hay, Addie May Hay, you will find out quite a bit about the Otterbourne area.

GLEN: Ok, and what was Center location?

MRS. TOBUREN: Just right south of Colby.

GLEN: Do you still have a copy of your certificate?

MRS. TOBUREN: I still have a copy of all the certificates I have ever had. If you would like to see them, I will look them up.

GLEN: Ok, great. Now I would like to ask you some questions about discipline and what was expected of you as a teacher. Would you describe a typical day as to what you had to do before school and after school?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, when I got there of a morning, if it was warm weather there was not a lot to do other than greet the children, because the housekeeping I had done before I left the schoolhouse the evening before, like sweeping the floor, cleaning the blackboards, or what have you that needed to be done. If it was winter time, then

I had to build a fire, the first year I taught I had a big potbelly stove in the center of the schoolhouse, and that is where we got our heat. There was a coal house from where I had to carry in the coal, I had to empty the ashes, and be sure everything was ready for the day. If the children came and it was cold weather, why a lot of times we would just gather around the stove, warm up, and try to warm up the schoolhouse before we started school. Depending upon how many grades I had, I would start hearing classes. If you heard every class you would have forty of fifty different classes and they were very very short of course. Generally, you would start out with the first grader, and have reading which was the first and most important thing that you did for the children. You would have the child read and a lot of times, if you just had one they would stand by your desk to read their lesson. Then I would give them some seat work, and they would go back to their seat, we did not have workbooks like we have now, but we had other things to do, words to study, flashcards, or what ever I had made. Then you would proceeded, generally with the reading classes, by this time it was time for recess, we had two recesses. We took up school about nine o'clock and about ten thirty we had recess. Recess was really important because you were everything, the playground instructor, as well as the disciplinarian, and what have you, it was a time you let your hair down, and played with the kids. We would just go out and play games if you had larger children, and I generally did, we would play softball, and the little children might play some of their own games. Then, after recess we would come back and maybe get into some arithmetic. I would put them through the arithmetic

paces. Of course, the main courses were reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling. Most of the spelling would be oral and not written. The chalkboard or blackboard were used not only by the teacher, but by the children. If they needed to study their spelling lesson, they could write the words on the chalkboard, and they could do the same thing practicing their multiplication tables. Those are the things they would do while I was hearing some of the other classes. Once in a while, you would have a older child help a younger child. I did not do as much of that maybe as I could have, I thought perhaps it was my responsibility to teach and not to have someone else do it, which did not mean the older children did not help the other children somewhat but not to a great extent. Everybody brought their lunch, and when we had lunch time they just sat in their seats and ate their cold lunch. We never had any hot lunch while I was teaching. I do remember when I went to school, one year the teacher had different families bring something hot, like a pot of soup, and we would share it with everybody, or maybe a pot of cocoa, or something for the children, but I never did that to any extent. As soon as we were through eating we went out playing again cause we had a hour for noon hour. Then, in the afternoon various subjects had to be taught, the older children had history, geography, we did not have social studies when I started, it was geography, spelling, and agriculture. These were some of the subjects that you would teach the older children. Then, we would have another recess. Sometimes during the end of the day we might have some extra time and have a cipherring match or a spelling bee or something just for recreation, so it was not just all study study.

GLEN: So your school day started at nine?

MRS. TOBUREN: Nine and ended at four.

GLEN: How long was the school year?

MRS. TOBUREN: Eight months at that time. If you will notice in one of my albums it tells the length of the terms. Up to 1930 eight months was the longest they had school.

GLEN: Was that mainly to work around the farm seasons?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, perhaps and economics might of had something to do with it. It cost a little more to have one more month of school.

GLEN: As a teacher how were you expected to conduct yourself in the community? As far as morals, ethics, and that type of things.

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, you were suppose to be respectable, and I never had any trouble because I was a pretty calm person, and things like that did not bother me. I did not teach during the years they had one, two, three. If you wear your dresses too short, or your face too red, or something, well, that's immoral and you shouldn't be a school teacher. I expect you have noticed, or seen some of those things that have been listed in times gone by, but I did not do anything different when I was a teacher than I did prior to being a teacher. As far as my personal experiences are concerned I never had any trouble as to how I was going to conduct myself. I didn't sow many wild oats as a young woman.

GLEN: You said earlier that you were expected to be single, that teachers were.

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, yes particularly in the city schools, and that is why I said to the people, will you hire a married woman, and that was 1941. Well, I don't know that teachers were that scarce, but

they hadn't found one they wanted, so they did start hiring married women. Now when I went back into the Colby Schools in 1956, when I was married in 1937, I had this contract that said, if you were married you could not teach, I had the same Superintendent Mr. Dennen, you probably heard the name, a fine Superintendent. He ask me to do some substitute work, and I said, I had not even thought of doing that. At that time, I guess, you didn't even have to have a certificate in force to do substitute work. This was in 1956 and after the war teachers were more scarce, so I substituted a little over there. Mr. Nickel one day told Mr. Dennen, he said, I think I found a teacher for you. Mr. Dennen said, who is it? Mr. Nickel gave him my name, and Mr. Dennen said, oh, I know all about her, and so I went in one day to pick up my substitute check and Mr. Dennen said, say, wouldn't you like to go back to teaching? I said, you mean you will have me, that was the words I said to him, because the last time I taught under him I was single, now I was married. His answer was, we would love to have you. So, you see how it had changed in twenty years, it really had, and they were anxious to get married women.

GLEN: Who evaluated you as a teacher?

MRS. TOBUREN: The County Superintendent. It was the County Superintendent who visited every school. I not sure, but I think he came twice a year, and he would come, you didn't know when he was coming, he would come in, very quietly set down in the back of the room, and observe what was going on.

GLEN: Did he spend most of a day each time or how long was he there?

MRS. TOBUREN: No, I never had one spend very long, maybe 30 minutes, maybe an hour. Generally, they would ask you some questions. It was just like any evaluation a teacher was going to have. You know, you're a little bit shaky, but I don't know, I didn't worry too much about it.

GLEN: Was the County Superintendent your immediate supervisor?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes he was. Of course, we had a state course of study that we followed, which told us what was to be taught in each grade. So that came from the state, and was mandated by the state.

GLEN: The County Superintendent made sure you were following it?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes, he was suppose to see if you were carrying out what you were suppose to do, and of course, when the children were in the seventh and eighth grade they took county examinations in order to be eligible for high school. Some examinations in the seventh and some in the eighth. They had to pass these in order to be eligible to enter high school.

GLEN: Now, I have a couple of discipline questions. What were some of the rules you had as a rural school teacher?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, I was kind of tough, and I don't know that I was either. I didn't allow a lot of silliness in my classroom. There was humor yes, but not really any meanness. You know, at that time you could paddle children, and I think maybe, I paddled one little boy for the kind of language he used, but they pretty much sat in their seats, and did their own thing. There just wasn't a lot of horseplay around my school room, I just didn't allow it.

GLEN: Did you find at that time that what ever you used for discipline the parents backed you up?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right, teachers at that time were respected and looked up to, and the kids were supposed to do what the teacher said. Just as I was when I was in school. I went to school, and my parents said, if you get in trouble at school, you're in trouble when you get home, and that was more or less the feeling at that time where I taught. I didn't have any trouble with the children as far as discipline or kicking up their heels were concerned, they were just good kids, good country kids.

GLEN: When there was a problem with discipline were they generally paddled or how was it handled?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, like I said, I paddled this one little boy probably for the language he used, but generally, I might not let them go out to recess, or I have been guilty of having them write something so many times, I will, or I will not. When I started teaching, I was only seventeen years old. I wasn't eighteen until after school started, and I don't know how wise I was about a lot of things, but I'm not sure, that I might not of had children learn something for discipline, had them memorize something, or write something, like I won't do this or won't do that, but generally, I didn't slap them or pinch them, I didn't do things like that, if I was going to paddle them, I would give them a swat or two on the seat and that was it, because I didn't believe in being mean to kids.

GLEN: When you were single, and teaching were you required to live in any particular place, or could you pretty much choose where you lived?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, you were just lucky if you could find a place to stay. The first year I lived about a mile from the schoolhouse with

an elderly couple, I didn't have a car of course, I walked to school unless this lady took sympathy on me and took me in her Model-T. The next three years I lived about a half mile away in a very nice place, with the lady that ran the clothes garden, Joyce Kleinsorge. I lived with her and her parents. She was born while I was teaching down there, so I had a lovely place to stay, and lucky that I did. When I first taught back at Otterbourne, I stayed with my sister, who took care of my son for me. They lived in the community, and that was easy. Otherwise, I came to Colby and stayed with my parents. Then, after I was married, I stayed at home and drove. I did have to board out the first few years that I taught.

GLEN: Now, I have some questions about curriculum. You referred earlier to the subjects that were offered at each grade level. You said, mostly reading, writing and arithmetic?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes, you had to have history, geography, and civics, then in the upper grades agriculture, they were country kids.

GLEN: Of these different subjects that you had, how did you decide what textbook to use? Or did you use a textbook?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, I didn't decide because the textbooks were mandated by the state. The state selected the textbooks, and of course, everybody bought their own textbooks. The school did not handle the textbooks.

GLEN: Ok, the textbooks were state mandated. When they bought their own textbooks, did they just find someone from the year before and buy from them, or what?

MRS. TOBUREN: If they could, sometimes the child would have a brother or sister who used the book, but as the books changed, then

they were required to be changed, like if we had the Winston reading series and changed the children had to get a different textbook.

GLEN: Where did they buy the new textbooks?

MRS. TOBUREN: The drugstore, they generally handled them, because we didn't have a bookstore, so it was generally through the drugstores here in Colby.

GLEN: Did the schools you taught in have libraries?

MRS. TOBUREN: Very meager, I think there was an amount that was set aside to buy books, something like two dollars and a half a year for books for the library, so you might say, we had no libraries in the schools where I taught. We had reference books, but they were just so meager. When I went to school, I don't remember any other books in the school besides the children's textbooks, except the dictionary, and it was on a roller. We had one teacher when I was in the first grade, if she wanted to know something, that someone had to ask her, and she didn't know it, she would say roll the dictionary to me, and that's where she would get her information. We didn't have reference books what so ever when I was a child. I remember, when I was a child, the first storybooks I had were given to me. I was so proud when I was able to read them. So, what I did when I was in first grade, I read through my primer, my first reader, and almost through the second reader. When I was in second grade, I started over in the second reader and read the second reader. We just did not have any supplementary texts, it's a wonder that we learned anything, but knowledge wasn't as great as it is now, and we learned what we needed to know I guess.

GLEN: At the end of the school year how did you decide, or how were the children promoted from grade to grade?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, you gave them grades each month. We had grade cards that went home each month, and you graded them generally, by percentage at that time. If you had so many questions that were worth so much, then you would just average them up. It was difficult to compare the child in one class with another child in another class, so if you felt like they could go on you so noted. If a child could read the first reader, and do a pretty good job, you figured that child was ready to go on to the second reader. Well, the spelling was done the same way, if they could pass their spelling in first grade, then you would figure they were ready to go on to second grade. The same way with mathematics, if they knew their multiplication tables in third grade or fourth grade you figured they were ready to go on. We had so many yardsticks. We had this course of study that we followed to see that the children went over a certain amount of material.

GLEN: Ok, you said, that when they were in seventh grade and eighth grade they had achievement tests for them to take before they could go into high school?

MRS. TOBUREN: They were sent out by the state, and a few times I helped give them. A couple of teachers would go together to give the examinations. The children would come from several schools, and we would give these examinations. Then, the examinations went in to the county. If the children passed, they went on to the next grade. I never had a child fail in seventh or eighth grade, so they couldn't graduate.

GLEN: Speaking of graduation, did you have graduation exercises for the eighth graders?

MRS. TOBUREN: They had one in Colby, which was county wide, and the children from the rural schools would come and go through the graduation exercises.

GLEN: At eighth grade level?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: What kind of extracurricular activities did you have?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, we had a lot of plays and a lot of entertainments, of course, we are talking about what the children did. Art, art at that time, I suppose, would be extracurricular. Art would probably be pictures that the child colored. As far as being creative, I didn't know a thing about teaching art, and mostly, it was just cutting and pattern work. If you wanted the children to make a duck, you would have a pattern, and the child would just cut the paper, paste it, and make a duck. As far as, music was concerned we would sing, but we didn't have any instrument. Only in one of the schoolhouses, that I ever was in did we have a piano, or maybe that was an organ, and I used that a little bit, but we would just sing without any music, just by rote. One year I took a course, and got a hold of some records, and taught the children with records some songs, but that was several years after I started teaching. I have forgot what year it was. That was something that we had at what they called county institute. Every year they would have a session where the teachers would all come for two or three days, and they would present some things. Maybe they would present some art ideas, they would present some musical ideas, with some new

approaches. As far as extracurricular, we put on entertainment for Christmas, and we always had one at the end of the year. We called them programs, we had box suppers, and we would put on a program. We would always have lots of fun putting those on, that was a fun time.

GLEN: Was that all your responsibility to organize?

MRS. TOBUREN: Oh sure, when we were going to have it, so on and so forth. I remember the first Christmas I had a pine tree in the schoolhouse and I used real live candles on it, it was a wonder I didn't burn the schoolhouse down. People came and saw that, and no one seemed to be alarmed. I guess, the reason I did it was because somewhere in the schoolhouse I found these candleholders that clipped on the Christmas tree, and I thought that surely if they had those I could put candles on. When I was teaching at Otterbourne my husband rigged up, with just a car battery, lights on our Christmas tree, so we had some real lights. There was no rural electrification when I taught, that came later. There weren't even telephones in the areas.

GLEN: What about sports? Was there any type of sports?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, we played baseball or softball as far as the sports were concerned. We didn't have a basketball goal anyplace that I taught, so the children couldn't play basketball. Games, we just played games, Pump Pump Pull Away, Annie Over, Ring Around The Rosie, Last Couple Out, or Lose Your Supper some of those good old fashion games. We played those at recess.

GLEN: Did your school ever play another school in softball or anything like that?

MRS. TOBUREN: No, we didn't.

GLEN: The next group of questions I have deal with the building itself, supplies, and that type of thing. First, when was the schoolhouse built, and who built them, and of what were they built?

MRS. TOBUREN: All of the schoolhouses I taught in were wooden, and the one where I went to school was built a few years before I started to school in 1918, but I don't know when it was built prior to that. It is the one out at the museum. Otterbourne was a fairly new school, I would imagine, that when I taught there it wasn't too old. It was one of the nicer schools in the county, it had a basement, it had a furnace, it had the windows on one side, which we used to think was necessary for left hand lighting. It was a very nice school. The others were not, they were older.

GLEN: Were they generally built by the patrons of the district?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, they were built with taxes. They ran their schools just like they do now, they would assess the people so much, so many mills you know.

GLEN: Then they would have a contractor build them?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right, that would be up to the school board. There were three school board members, and I didn't have anything to do with building a new building, but I would have an idea that the school board members would be the ramrods of something like that when they figured they needed a new building like down at Olive Branch, they would have assessed enough taxes in order to build. It depended upon the times.

GLEN: In the schools that you taught in you mentioned earlier that they were heated with a potbelly stove.

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, when I went to school it was, and the first school I taught in had that kind. Olive Branch had a furnace in the basement, a floor furnace, which made it very nice. I could bank the fire, and it would be fairly decent in the morning, it wouldn't be completely cold. Then, when I taught in Otterbourne the second time I think they had an oil stove, I know that Center had an oil stove, and that the oil was piped in to what they called oil burning stoves, which came out in the late thirties and early forties. In town when we first got natural gas the same thing happened, before the era of furnaces, people in the old houses got these old oil burning stoves, and they piped the natural gas into the stove. They called them parlor furnaces, which was more or less what I had out here, only it was run by bottled gas, I suppose.

GLEN: How about the lighting?

MRS. TOBUREN: One of those.

GLEN: You had kerosine lanterns then.

MRS. TOBUREN: If you were going to have a program, the people in the community would bring gas lanterns or things that produced more light.

GLEN: During your normal school day you had enough windows that you probably didn't even use lights?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right, I don't know that I ever lighted a lamp. If I did I didn't have more than one or two and what could children have seen with so little light.

GLEN: What about restroom facilities?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well there were the outdoor privies, one for the boys, and one for the girls, it was that way all the way through.

GLEN: What about drinking water and that type of thing?

MRS. TOBUREN: Drinking water was carried to the school in all of the schoolhouses that I taught, it was brought in. I didn't bring it, and I don't know who brought the drinking water or the water to wash, of course, we had a wash pan, we washed our hands at noon lunchtime, but it was carried, the patrons brought it, I don't just remember who. Later they had dug wells and had pumps out at the well, then they didn't have to carry water.

GLEN: When the buildings needed something done to them like just normal upkeep who did that?

MRS. TOBUREN: The school board saw to it. I was having a program one time down at Olive Branch, and one of the school board members came in to visit, and he looked around. I had Christmas decorations up already, crepe paper strung here, there, and everywhere. I said, we were going to have a program, a Christmas tree, and so forth. He said, in this dirty school room, why this is terrible, this school needs painting, I will get it painted over the weekend. I thought, oh brother. I took down the Christmas decorations, and he had that room painted for me over the weekend, so it would be clean for the Christmas program. So you see, there were those rare occasions, but the school board was responsible. Of course, he knew what he did was all right. There was a treasurer, a clerk and I don't remember what the other one's title was, but I got the money from the treasurer, and the clerk issued the what ever you called it, that I had to have in order to get the money, maybe the other one was the president, I don't know.

GLEN: As far as the names of the schools where you taught, were there any significance to the names?

MRS. TOBUREN: I think Otterbourne probably got its name because of the activity around Otterbourne. They were going to start a town. As far as, this Nicol school we have out at the museum, we can't seem to find why it was named Nicol school. There were people in the community by the name of Nicol. It is spelled N-I-C-O-L, but we can not find out if that is why they called it, Nicol school. I would just surmise that, that might be. Olive Branch, I don't know. Antelope, I don't know why, maybe an antelope ran across when they were building it, I don't know.

GLEN: You said the one school's name was Center because-?

MRS. TOBUREN: I don't know why, but it was just south of town three or four miles at that time, from forth street, but its just beyond the interchange where it sat about a mile, and they called it Center, center between what, I don't know. Soddy, one school I passed when I went to Olive Branch was called the Soddy, and it was originally was a sod schoolhouse, and they just called it Soddy, even after they put up a frame building, they continued to call it Soddy.

GLEN: Do you know what happen to all of the schoolhouses?

MRS. TOBUREN: Most of them were sold, and people would buy them, to take them to their farms, and use them for something, or convert them into another building. Some of them were brought to town. There are some old schoolbuildings in town, in fact, there is one right across the street from the grade school now, that was originally a rural school. Most of them were just sold, and moved off.

GLEN: Let's talk about your students for a little bit. At what age did the children begin school at that time?

MRS. TOBUREN: Six.

GLEN: Six years old?

MRS. TOBUREN: Six years old, and of course, it was first grade. Now, if they were six before the last of the year they could start to school.

GLEN: Before the first of January?

MRS. TOBUREN: I think that was a state law. Now, if the parent thought the child was ready, you know sometimes they think this child is a genius, until they start to school, and if the teacher had the time to work with them, I have heard of some starting at the age of five.

GLEN: Ok, but the set age was six?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right, that was the state set age.

GLEN: How did most of your students get to school?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, walked, horseback, or sometimes their parents brought them by wagon and team. My sister and I sometimes rode horseback. Some neighbor children had a cart. When I was in first grade, everybody had the flu, that was right after World War I in 1918. They sent me to school, I was six years old, on a big old horse all by myself two miles. Now, we were on a horse as soon as we could walk almost, my Dad was a horse lover, and had many many horses, in fact, he had ninety-nine when he left the farm to sell at his farm sale. So, a lot of kids had horses to ride, if they came a distance they had a wagon or cart, and a lot of them walked.

GLEN: Were the country schools pretty well localized or did kids come from quite a ways to go to them?

MRS. TOBUREN: They tried to, so the children wouldn't have to walk over three miles or so, usually two miles would be kind of a maximum, that children had to walk.

GLEN: About how much did it cost a family to sent a child to school per year?

MRS. TOBUREN: Oh, well goodness sake, the cost of the books, which wouldn't be too much. Four or five dollars probably would buy all the books that a child would need. Other than that, I wouldn't know what the cost would be, seeing that you feed and water a child anyway. If you want to know something about cost, I can tell you that in 1935 when I went to Fort Hays I borrowed two hundred dollars to help me through one semester of college from the local PEO. What could you do with two hundred dollars today?

GLEN: Was there any kind of dress code for the kids or how did they dress?

MRS. TOBUREN: Anything warm, we didn't have any, that is, I didn't have any dress codes for my children in the rural school. I don't know who would have mandated that. Of course, they did in the Colby school, the kids couldn't wear slacks, you know, little girls, if they did, they could wear them out at recess. Then, they had to pull them off when they came inside. Little girls had to be in dresses. The kids wore dresses, and I wore dresses, I never wore anything but a dress when I taught.

GLEN: About how many of your students went to high school and maybe even college?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, the percentage was not too great. I don't know of any of the children the first year I taught that went on to college.

I had one student, that has his masters degree in Geology. He graduated from the eighth grade in 1949. As far as I know, of the children that I taught in rural school, I don't know of any who went on to higher education except Claude Rohrbough. I did teach Ernest Kistler, our county commissioner, in second, third and fourth grade out at Otterbourne. Of course, he didn't go on other than high school. Lloyd Lundsway, who use to be sheriff here, I taught him and he didn't do anything other than just high school.

GLEN: A good majority of your students did go on to high school though?

MRS. TOBUREN: I wouldn't say that a majority of them did, but maybe three fourths of them did. A lot of them didn't go on at that time.

GLEN: You said earlier that there was a school board, it was a three member school board?

MRS. TOBUREN: Three members.

GLEN: Was there a P.T.A. or any type of parent organization?

MRS. TOBUREN: No, that wasn't necessary. With that few students you had contact with the parents through the children.

GLEN: Was the school board responsibility for hiring teachers, or who hired the teachers?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: The school board did?

MRS. TOBUREN: Right.

GLEN: What was your salary when you started teaching?

MRS. TOBUREN: Ninety dollars a month for eight months. The next year, I got a hundred dollars. When I moved over to Olive Branch, I

got a hundred dollars, and then they had to start reducing my salary, because they didn't have enough taxes, the next year I got ninety. Then, they had to reduce it to seventy-five, that was the year they said, we will give you everything that the taxes will bring in, because that is just all its going to generate.

GLEN: Ok, then your final year of teaching what was your salary?

MRS. TOBUREN: Seventy-five dollars, I never taught for less than seventy-five. Some teachers taught for as small as forty and fifty throughout Kansas.

GLEN: Did you have any voice in the salary decision or did they just tell you what you were going to get, and that the way it was?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, they would tell you what they could afford to pay.

GLEN: There was no kind of negotiations, or anything like that?

MRS. TOBUREN: Well, the only time we had negotiation was the year I got seventy-five dollars, the last year I taught at Olive Branch. The lady I stayed with said to me, you know what Dad told me, that they could of given you more, because they are going to have more money than they thought they were going to have. I said, how much more, well, they could have given you a hundred dollars more. I said, well, if they could give me a hundred dollars more maybe they will change my contract. So, I got in my car, my folks car, I didn't have a car, and I went down to see Mr. Beaver. I said, Vera tells me that you could have given me more salary. Would you break my contract, and give me a new one. He said, well, I'm willing to, and I just went around and saw all three school board members. I made a hundred

dollars that day. Well, a hundred dollars was nothing to sneeze at in those days.

GLEN: How were you paid, were you paid by check or--?

MRS. TOBUREN: Yes, and you had to have what they called a draft. You went to the clerk, he made this draft out, then you had to have it signed by the two members, then you took it to the treasurer, and he was allowed to give you your check, but that was always kind of a hassle. The first place I taught you had to run that down, later some of the school board were a little more accommodating, and they would go ahead and do that for me, and send it around to get it signed, then give me my check. The first year I didn't even know how I was going to get my money. A lady came with my mother to get me, after I had taught a month. She said, well, are you going to get paid. I said, well, I hadn't even thought about it, I had been so busy I hadn't even thought about the money. She said, well, do you have your draft. I said, what's that? She said, you have to get this from a school board member. She had taught in a rural school. So, it took us quite a little while that evening to run it down, and get all of this taken care of. But, like I said, some them became very cooperative, and did those things so you didn't have to run them down.

GLEN: As far as when you were teaching in a rural school did you have any type of budget to work with for your supplies that you needed?

MRS. TOBUREN: Heavens no, they didn't have any money. If I needed anything I used, I bought it out of my own pocket. If I decorated for the Christmas program, I bought the crepe paper

myself. Kids usually came to school with colored crayons and sometimes water paints. Even paper, construction paper and things like that, there was no budget for anything.

GLEN: Thinking back to like the coal or the heating oil and that type of thing how was it provided?

MRS. TOBUREN: Provided, well the coal was in a coal house. The first year I taught we had that terrible blizzard in 1931, and I was caught in the schoolhouse down here, and luckily there was a farm family about a quarter mile down that finally rescued another girl and I, well, that is a long story. Had I tried to go out and get coal for the stove, I found out there was a drift in front of the coal house, there was no way I could have gotten in there. I wasn't smart enough to know that we were having this terrible blizzard. I went to school, and everything was just kind of calm, but there was a wind in the northeast. One man said, I'm not going to sent the kids to school today, I think if that wind changes, we will have a blizzard. Thank goodness, he didn't, he keep his children home, and that was when it came. I just had a little coal there in the room, and if the thing had went on for a couple of days, we would of froze to death or burned the seats, I don't know what we would have done. I didn't know that much about the weather, and there were no telephones in the area, none of the parents could have reached the schoolhouse or each other. They just trusted each other to care for the children if necessary. That was the bad thing, there was no communication.

GLEN: Was the coal paid for out of the taxes?

MRS. TOBUREN: Sure, they would say, they would give you all the money that taxes will allow after we get the money for the coal, and

the library, I think that was about two and a half dollars for books. That was later, it wasn't the first year that I taught. The first year I taught I didn't see any library books, or money for them.

GLEN: Well that is all of my questions if you have anything that you would like to add, feel free.

MRS. TOBUREN: I know that teaching in the rural school, and teaching the way I did, you had a sense of accomplishment, you felt like you were somebody, you felt like you were respected in the community, and you didn't have all of this hassle between parents and teachers and so forth. I think as far as being a teacher today, they don't look up to you, and think you're anything so special, but really, it was a real good feeling to be a teacher when I started, of course, I always enjoyed teaching even when I quit. You know how things are any more, as far as, the kids know more than the teacher, and now the parents will back up the child against the teacher, and there is much more friction, shall I say, between the home and the school. We didn't have the broken homes we have now, another thing, the children came to school to learn, and it was just fun. I thoroughly enjoyed it, I just thought it was great. My daughter said the same thing after her first year of teaching, she was kind of like I was when she got her first paycheck. She said, you know it is great to get paid for something that don't seem like work. You know, work is something that maybe you don't want to do, but to me it was such a pleasure, I never thought of school teaching as anything I didn't want to do, and you shouldn't be in it if you don't feel that way. It was really something that I didn't think was hard labor, it was just

something that was great to do, and I enjoyed all my twenty-nine years.

GLEN: Ok, well, thank you very much.

MRS. TOBUREN: You're welcome.