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Interview with Louise Dooley

Bertha Johnson

Fort Hays State University

Louise Elizabeth Hyde Dooley

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CHAPTER TWO
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Bertha: This is Bertha Johnson on June 30, 1989. My oral history interview of a one-room Kansas schoolhouse teacher is with Louise Hyde Dooley of Beloit, Kansas. This interview is taking place at her home. Today we are going back in time to the late 1920s when you began your teacher career as a one-room schoolhouse teacher in Mitchell County, Kansas. Louise, tell us a bit about yourself.

Louise: We grew up on a farm south of town in the Hyde Community. My grandfather was the first homesteader south of the Solomon River in 1869 and his brothers all came and homesteaded the adjoining farms. They all settled out in the community. He gave an acre of land for Hyde School which was District 62. That was the school I attended. I went all eight grades at Hyde School and graduated in 1924. I then went on to Beloit High School and graduated in 1928. I was only 16 years old. School boards didn't think

16 years old. School boards didn't think I knew enough to teach school but finally one school board hired me. So I taught at Enterprise School my first year for \$70 a month. I boarded in the district and paid \$5 a week. My salary was \$50 that I had left. I had seven little Kelley's. Five of them were brothers and sisters and two were cousins. My second year I went to Riverside which was down close to my home. I stayed at home while I taught school there. The third year I went to my home school, Hyde School, and taught there. My fourth year I got quite a large advance in salary when I went to another school over west. I had fourteen students in all eight grades. The roads were so bad that I had to stay in the district half of the time and the other half I spent most of my money fixing up my car to go over those roads. Then I went back to Riverside the next year. I then went to District 82 out south of Beloit for the next three years. I was

going to get married and since they would not hire married teachers I went over to my husband's district, Walnut Grove, and taught there for two years. I was the first married teacher to teach in Mitchell County. The roads were bad so I went out west of Beloit and taught District 1 for two years. Then I went out to Laban Creek, then on over to District 100. That made 16 years of teaching. I was sort of tired of it, so I quit for a few years. A couple weeks before school started, a Solomon Rapids' teacher found out she was pregnant. I went out to teach Solomon Rapids during the 1944-45 term. I did not have a certificate at that time. I did a correspondence course through Manhattan in education, physiology, and psychology and got nine hours. I got an elementary provisional certificate which I never did use except during substitute work here in the city grades. I was city substitute for years for Field School, Roger School,

and seventh and eighth grade up at BHS. There was a lot of city substitute work because of a teacher getting sick or during a music program a teacher would have to accompany so I would have their morning class. The hardest thing I did was teach kindergarten when the teacher got ill. I had to teach the kindergarten class for about a month. When the superintendent called me I said, "I just can't do it. I'm just not qualified." He said, "Well, you just have to. We can't get anyone else!" I had 55 kindergarten children in one school and 50 in another one. They just drove me crazy. They were all over the place. They talked all the time. They never sat down. I just don't know what I did, but I had a couple of little kids, one in each school that were very good. They just knew how things should be done and I sort of went along with them. They were the cutest things. They were a big help.

Bertha: What subjects were studied?

Louise: Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, U.S. History, Kansas History, agriculture, civics, grammar, and spelling were taught.

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

Louise: The school day was 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. for 8 months from September to the last of April.

Bertha: What teaching methods were used? Tell us about phonics and the way you taught your reading and math.

Louise: I had a couple of phonics books, I don't remember what they were. They were real good. They had a little story. The first and second grade had no grammar book. It was during these times that I read little stories on phonics; for example, a snake would say s-s-s. The children would make the s-s-s sound. And then we made little booklets like "S" is for snake. They would draw pictures of the snake. They kept the booklets they made. The last half of the year we went

Into the different families--the "th" family, these, that, those and them; the "wh" family, who, when, where, why; the "at" family; the "it" family--all the families. The children learned to spell with phonics. You have to teach phonics to teach reading and spelling. There is no other way.

Bertha: When these children were writing their sentences, did you make them spell their words correctly as they wrote the sentences?

Louise: Right. Some of the time I would have the children, one at a time, go to the board (I had one of those chalk deals that made five lines at a time) and they would write A is for apple, B is for baby, and C is for cow and different things. When they went back to their seats, I always had something for them to do.

Bertha: Did you let the children use the chalkboard quite often?

Louise: Yes, a lot.

Bertha: Was there any time that you had little chalkboards or slates for the children?

Louise: Yes, we did have some.

Bertha: Sometimes in our schools we have them. I have some in my school now.

Louise: They are nice.

Bertha: About your civics and seventh and eighth grade subjects, how did you do that?

Louise: Well, I just had a regular class for each one of them. You did not combine the seventh and eighth grades much because they were different subjects and different levels.

Bertha: You had to be very efficient at explaining something to these kids if you had all those grades and you had to get all those classes done each day. How many classes did you have every day?

Louise: That year I had 24 students. I had 36 classes a day.

Bertha: How long was your morning recess?

Louise: Morning recess was 15 minutes. The afternoon recess was 15 minutes and of course you had your hour at noon.

Bertha: The kids really had to work hard when they were in school.

Louise: I insisted that they didn't dawdle. If one child isn't doing anything, it is a bad atmosphere for the rest.

Bertha: What teaching aids were made available to you? How did this improve teaching over what you were doing previously?

Louise: We did not have many teaching aids. We had our own charts, multiplication tables, and phonics cards with the sounds on them. We just really didn't have many teaching aids.

Bertha: Tell me about this little gelatin duplicator thing that you made one year when they gave it to you at Teacher Institute.

Louise: Well, it was just a 9 x 13 inch pan covered with a piece of paper. I don't remember what we used. We filled it full of water with some kind of gelatin in it. It had a coloring of some kind in it. It gelled and then we would write our questions on paper and put it over the

gelatin. It would transfer onto that. Then you would put your other papers on it and it would take it off that (make copies).

Bertha: The pencil you did it with had to be a certain kind.

Louise: It had to be indelible.

Bertha: It would then go into the gelatin. As you pressed your papers on there, the copy would come off.

Louise: Yes, that's right. It was a big help for first grade work. Those little kids liked to do different things. If you wanted copies of addition facts or something you could run a whole bunch off.

Bertha: It really was a big help to you.

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: Were there, at anytime, any workbooks that would accompany your readers?

Louise: No.

Bertha: You had to do all that yourself. Did you have anything like a teacher's manual to help you?

Louise: We had the Kansas State Manual which told us what we were supposed to cover.

Bertha: That was the extent of the help that you got?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: How did you determine how you were going to teach? How did you decide? When you were 16 and you walked into that classroom what was your first thought?

Louise: I thought, "What am I doing here!"

Bertha: So what did you call on. What did you pull out of the back of your memory to do this?

Louise: I went back to when I went to school. I had an excellent first grade teacher. I remember that she taught us in numbers. She said teach them 1, 4, and 7 because they are basically straight lines. So I taught the 1s, 4s, and 7s. Then when you start teaching 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, they go 1, 4, 7. Then you taught the numbers starting with 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0 with the 1(10, 1 with the 1(11), etc. You finally got them to count and

write to 100 and had a form that was easy to see because they wouldn't put 13 on the 11 line or a 25 on the 24 line. They had to add to the formation. Then they would get along pretty well.

Bertha: Then they could look at the top and count by 10. They could start with the 0 and count to 9, then you would come up to 10 on the next column. As they went across it would be 10, 20, 30, etc. That is one way they still teach today. That was a good way to do it.

Louise: When you came to a 5, you went down and around and put a tail on it. A 6 was just down and around. An 8 was a figure 8 and 9 was around and down. You sort of had a written rule that you tried to help the children to help them figure things out in their minds. I remember when we got to where we could make the 12, we made little clocks. Whoever could write to 12 could have a clock on their wrist. They were just little pasteboard things

with a ribbon up through it and tied on their wrist. They liked that.

Bertha: When these older children were in class you would start something in first, second, and third grades so they would have something to do. Then you would go back and pick up your older children.

Louise: I might have first, second, third, and fourth reading, then I might have eighth grade agriculture. Then I'd go on with the other classes and have eighth grade reading. But, you had to give that agriculture, civics, and Kansas History in one of these periods. The arithmetic period was no time for it. You had to have it in your other class periods.

Bertha: Would you tell me what agriculture was; I have never had to teach agriculture.

Louise: Agriculture was basically a text book and it was basically from Kansas. I would tell the breed of horses, the breed of cows (both stock cattle and milk cattle), and the breed of hogs. It had gardening and other basic agriculture.

Bertha: That is interesting. We don't have anything like that now.

Louise: No, no, you don't have that. You don't have civics either do you?

Bertha: Yes, in seventh and eighth grades they do. Were any special classes or unique educational services offered, such as special education?

Louise: No, the only thing we had was a music teacher. Since I taught music myself, there were only one or two districts that ever hired her.

Bertha: You were a self-contained classroom? You took care of all the kids who could not learn very well, those who were over-achievers and gifted. You did all that, right?

Louise: We never especially thought about the gifted and the others with difficulties. They all stayed pretty much together in their studies. They started out together and they learned together. They were basically kind of level. You could assign so many of them so much. They

would all get it. I had only one or two students that were really poor students and could not keep up. The rest of them started together and they stayed together. You could increase some of their studies, maybe, after Christmas. You gave them what they could get.

Bertha: After Christmas you did give them a little more ?

Louise: Yes, so they would be through in time to review the seventh and eighth grade examination, last day programs, music programs, and spelling and track meets. You had to.

Bertha: Tell me about this bi-monthly testing program that the state sent out.

Louise: At the end of every two months, the state would send out examination questions that covered the first two months, or second two months, etc. They did not send any to first grade because they could not read. It was little questions over what they had had in their textbooks up to that date. I walways made myself a chart as to how far I was to go in each grade

for each month so that I would not get behind. When you had bi-monthly examinations, you had to cover that ground because the questions would be over it.

Bertha: You never had a student that failed?

Louise: No.

Bertha: Not a one of your students?

Louise: Everyone of them passed.

Bertha: That really speaks well of your teaching abilities.

Louise: Well, we had to get them through. That was the way they rated you.

Bertha: In other words, their achievement was your evaluation. It was up to you.

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: Describe a typical school day curriculum.

Louise: Well, 9:00 a.m. until recess at 10:30 a.m., I had my arithmetic classes. From 10:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., I had my reading classes, seventh grade Kansas History, and eighth grade civics. Then we had lunch. From 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., we had our grammar classes and history classes. Then from 2:30 p.m. to

4:00 p.m., we had geography classes and spelling. Geography came in at the fourth grade. So you had fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade geography. Then you had your spelling class.

Bertha: That was a full day, wasn't it?

Louise: Yes, that was enough for that period.

Bertha: Did you ever send homework home?

Louise: If they did not get it at school, they could take it home. Basically, I never sent a lot of homework home. If a child needed help in reading, I would ask the parents to sit down with him at night and read. About the first month of school, I would have my second graders bring their first grade readers back to school. We would take the first month to reread the first grade reader. We would go through all the lessons they had because those children did not read during the summer. They would forget.

Bertha: You would reinforce what they had learned the previous year.

Louise: Yes, then they could go on pretty well.

Bertha: Did the children buy their own books?

Were children responsible for their own books and supplies?

Louise: Yes. As far as the books were concerned, most of them would keep them if they had other children in the family and pass them down. Lots of times, when school was over, the parents would buy or exchange books for their children for the next year.

Bertha: Do you remember how long the state adopted textbooks lasted? Were they for a five year period, a ten year period?

Louise: I don't remember.

Bertha: They had to be for a little while because they were passed down from child to child.

Louise: Yes, they did. We had Stone's Arithmetic books a good many years. I remember we taught that.

Bertha: When the children were ready to go into high school from the eighth grade, who decided whether they passed?

Louise: They finished up their eighth grade studies, they did their review work, and they took the eighth grade examination at the Beloit High School. If they passed the examination, they went on to high school. If they failed some of those grades they would get a second examination or some would take them when the city schools took theirs. Lots of time they would have a second chance. They pretty much depended on getting through the first time.

Bertha: Did your school have a library?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: How many books were in it?

Louise: About 100 books.

Bertha: Tell me about the amount of money you got to spend for your library each year.

Louise: We really didn't get to spend any until along about 1940-41. I can't remember for sure when we started doing it. I think it was in the 1940s when they gave each school \$5 to buy books. You could

check books out of the Port Library or the County Superintendent's office.

Bertha: That extended your library for the kids. Did you have your kids read books for book reports?

Louise: Yes, I did.

Bertha: Can you recall any that they especially enjoyed?

Louise: They liked Sergeant York, Black Beauty, Little Women, and Little Men. They all liked the Bobbsy Twins. A third grader could read Bobbsy Twins. Then they had a series called A Pony Rider Boy that was similar to Bobbsy Twins.

Bertha: They still have the Bobbsy Twins books. Some of them have been revised. What was the atmosphere of the educational program in your school?

Louise: Well, I think it was warm and loose.

Bertha: I agree with you from just having visited with you. You seem so relaxed and you are so easy to talk to. I am enjoying this, immensely. What were some of the

rules of the school that may be different from today?

Louise: Well, one thing is that we always set a five minute bell so they could go to the bathroom and get a drink. I did not believe in spending school time for everyone to run out for a drink every time they turned around. Of course, if they needed to go to the bathroom, we let them go. It was more of an established thing that during this five minute period everyone was to go to the bathroom and get a drink.

Bertha: That means that they knew that they were there for a purpose. They knew why they came to school.

Louise: It's like I told you about that class I visited in the public schools. My land, I don't see how the teachers got anything done. My land, somebody was going to art, somebody was going here, somebody was going there, somebody was going to math. The door never quit banging. I don't see how those teachers teach with

teacher aides. How do you handle teacher's aides?

Bertha: I don't have any teacher's aides. Once-in-a-while a high school girl will come down to help me and I really appreciate that because they can work with a group. But, I am more in your generation. I am strict. They all know what to do.

Bertha: What were some special observances in your school? Did you have a Halloween party?

Louise: We had Halloween parties. The families all came. They all dressed up in this or that. We played games. We had bean bags, etc. I think I had 10 games. They kept score and at the end someone got a bag of apples or something. They bobbed for apples. We usually had some cider and donuts. It was just kind of a fun thing.

Bertha: Did you ever have box suppers or anything at your school?

Louise: I did once or twice. During the depression years, it was very difficult,

and I would not ask any of those mothers to put up a box because it took a lot of money to put up sandwiches and pie. I just didn't feel like it was the thing to do.

Bertha: That was an era in our history when the box suppers that were popular from the 1900s down through the 1920s had to give way because there was no money.

Louise: I'd say from 1929 until up into the early 1940s, box suppers were not very popular.

Bertha: How about Christmas? What did you do?

Louise: Well, we had Christmas parties. Of course we had trees and Santa Claus. Christmas programs were wonderful. We always had dialogues, songs, and reading. Everyone got to do something. If they could sing, they sang a song. They gave recitations or a dialogue. I always made divinity and chocolate fudge. Of course, at that time, you could make divinity for very little money. I would pass it around. The children drew names and gave gifts. Their mothers were usually able

to make new ribbons for the girls' hair.
They wore their best.

Bertha: Was it a time when the whole community
came?

Louise: Everyone came. The schoolhouse would be
packed.

Bertha: After the program you would pass out your
candy and gifts and then visit?

Louise: We had Santa Claus come and pass out the
gifts. We always had Santa Claus,
always.

Bertha: Were there any other times that you had a
program?

Louise: We always had a service for Kansas Day.
We would read some stories like America
for Me and a song by Esther M. Clark in
the civics book. Valentine's Day was
always a good one. Children always made
a Valentine's box and would bring their
valentines. I would have jello salad and
cookies or something. That was a fun
day.

Bertha: Tell me about Valentine's boxes.

Louise: It was just a big box. You put a hole in the middle of the top. You had red and white paper. They decorated it with little cupids and hearts or whatever they wanted.

Bertha: It was one big box and the kids put their valentines in there. Did everyone take turns when they passed them out?

Louise: No, usually I opened the box, read the names, and they would come up to get them. Then we'd have a little lunch. They'd go home tickled to death.

Bertha: You mentioned, previously, something about a music program. When was that held?

Louise: In the spring time, the county music teacher had a music program at Beloit High School with all the students from the rural schools participating. The students would sing the songs they learned during the school year. I accompanied those children so I had to go all the time. The teacher was Helen

McGrath. Did you ever know Helen

McGrath:

Bertha: Yes, she was a good friend of mine.

Louise: She was the rural music teacher for a year here. Then we had Emily Selbert. That program didn't last very long.

Bertha: It was just a passing thing then?

Louise: We had a superintendent, Lyle Cloefield. He was actually the most progressive superintendent we ever had. He was the one who started the music programs and the track meets. That was after the forties. The music program fizzled out after two or three years. The track meet and spelling bee continued.

Bertha: What about the track meet? When was that held?

Louise: It was usually held in March, the last of March. You had certain schools around you and they usually held it at my school. It seems like I always had the most children who could measure off the 50 yard dash, the 75 yard dash, and this and that dashes and get ready for it. It was quite a job getting ready for the

track meet because you had to measure off those races and this and that. The children always helped and they liked it.

Bertha: What about the last day of school? Did you do anything special?

Louise: Yes, we always had a program. Again, we had our dialogues, recitations, and songs. And they (the patrons) brought a big dinner or supper or whatever it might be. After the program, the children got their grade cards and this and that. And lots of time, they had little prizes for perfect attendance, or for book reviews, or for spelling, or for things that came through the superintendent's office.

Bertha: Did they ever have spelling bees or spelling contests?

Louise: Well, the spelling contest came in with the track meet. The morning was spent on academic things like the spelling contest. Then they had a math contest and a civics contest.

Bertha: Did they give ribbons to the kids?

Louise: Yes, they did.

Bertha: They combined academics and sports so all kids got a chance.

Louise: The district would bring in a big putluck dinner. The spelling bee we now have in the spring is an outgrowth of the track and spelling bee we had.

Bertha: How interesting. Was your school the Hyde School?

Louise: No, I only taught Hyde School one year. I taught Laban Creek District 82 the longest.

Bertha: Did the children from all the schools in Mitchell County, where you taught, have a special exercise for eighth grade graduation?

Louise: Yes, all the students from the rural schools in Mitchell County met at the Beloit High School on graduation day. They had little programs usually put on by some of the children who were eighth graders. Then they had the giving of diplomas.

Bertha: Let's go on to the questions concerning students. What was the usual age a child began school?

Louise: If their birthday was before Christmas and they were six years old before Christmas, they were eligible for school. If their birthday came after Christmas, they didn't start before the next year.

Bertha: Did this age vary?

Louise: No, it was the state law.

Bertha: State mandated?

Louise: That was it.

Bertha: Did many children move in and out of school during the year?

Louise: No, it was a farming community I always taught in, and they were pretty steady.

Bertha: What was the greatest distance traveled by any student and what was the mode of transportation?

Louise: Well, the greatest distance I ever had was a little boy and girl who came three miles. Their folks, lots of times, brought them and sometimes they walked. Since I went their way, if I wasn't going

to work late, they would help me clean the boards and dust the erasers. Then I would take them as far as I would go on the way home. I would take them within a mile of the way they went. It was an angular district that they were in and it made their journey longer.

Bertha: How did most students get to school?

Louise: They walked.

Bertha: Did any of them ride a horse or come by car?

Louise: Yes, some rode horses.

Bertha: How many students went to the schools that you taught?

Louise: Oh, it just varied. The smallest number of students that I ever had was five and the largest number I ever had was twenty-four.

Bertha: What grade levels did you teach?

Louise: One to eight.

Bertha: Was there ever a time that you had all eight grades?

Louise: Oh, yes.

Bertha: When you had 24 students, did you have all eight grades?

Louise: I had all eight grades. Most usually you did have all eight grades because lots of times there were four or five in a family. They would be in different grades.

Bertha: What type of occupations did the students usually take up?

Louise: Well, for the most part, most of them became farmers like their folks did. I had a priest, two nuns, two dentists, one doctor, and lots of teachers

Bertha: How many students went on to college?

Louise: Well, not too many.

Bertha: Did many of them go on to high school?

Louise: They all went on to high school except the two slower students I told you about.

Bertha: Did the students of your schools come from a particular cultural or heritage background?

Louise: A farming community.

Bertha: How about their heritage?

Louise: Most of their folks were German and Irish.

Bertha: What was the average number of years a student spent in school?

Louise: Eight in the rural school. They went to high school four years.

Bertha: How many years was a student required to go to school?

Louise: They were required to attend school until they were sixteen or graduated from the eighth grade.

Bertha: You told me you were sixteen when you taught school the first year. You had to be double promoted sometime.

Louise: You see, I went to school before this age law went in. Hyde Farm is just right down over the hill from Hyde School. My brother was six. Mother wasn't going to send me, but I wanted to go so badly that she finally broke down and said I could go. The teacher said, "Well, I'll take her." She had five in the first grade and I just fit right in. I started when I was five years old. when I graduated from high school, I was sixteen. Actually, I was seventeen when I started

teaching. That makes a little difference.

Bertha: Are there any "outstanding students" from any of the schools where you taught?

Louise: Well, I taught Richard Ellert who became a priest. He passed away at a young age. He was the bishop's right hand, and I think he just worked too hard. I had Sister Mary Relter, down in Salina. She has become quite prominent in the educational field. I had a lot of students who became teachers.

Bertha: You said you had a doctor.

Louise: Yes, he is deceased now. I also had an army dentist who is now deceased. A lot of my students are gone.

Bertha: You've told me about the letters you've received over the years from former pupils. They really respected and loved you.

Louise: Well, there was a whole different feeling those days about teachers by the students. You were actually about the only contact they had with anyone outside of their family. In the good old days,

people used to get together a lot during Sundays because their families would have big dinners. The depression sort of put an end to that.

Bertha: What was the cost of education to the student and his family?

Louise: We'll go back to this District 1. In 1937-38 my salary was \$65 a month. That means that the district paid \$520 a year for my salary, then the light bill was about \$5 a month, or \$40 a year. Usually you got a big can of sweeping compound, and that would cost about \$10, coal and fuel would have been about \$100. When you get that added up and divided by 21 students that was what it cost for their education. That was cheap (\$31.90).

Bertha: This was all paid for by taxes, wasn't it? What about the family itself? Was the only cost their supplies of paper, pencils, and books?

Louise: Yes, of course, they furnished their own. They sent lunch with their child.

Bertha: What was the dress and overall appearance of the students? What kind of clothing did they wear?

Louise: That was before slacks came into use. Well, I guess the last year or two we did have some slacks. For the most part, it was dresses, long stockings, and slippers for the girls. For the boys, it was overalls and little shirts.

Bertha: Describe a typical day before and after school.

Louise: Well, usually, the children got to school about 8:30 a.m. I never encouraged their coming early. I always said I'll be there by 8:30 a.m. I usually tried to get ther by a quarter after eight. I'd say don't come before 8:30 a.m. In the morning, I always had the fire to start. I would always put the sweeping compound on the floor at night before I went home. That sort of soaked into the wood by morning. It didn't do much good to put on sweeping compound and then sweep it right away. You usually had to let it

set. In the morning, it usually took me about 15 minutes to sweep the floors. I tried to do all my paper grading at night before I went home.

Bertha: How about after school?

Louise: After school, I usually got out and saw that the children were started down the road toward home. If they rode horses, they waited until the others were off the grounds before they got their horses out of the barn. Then we didn't have any trouble. Most usually, the children were good. They'd start down towards home right away.

Bertha: How are teaching ways or habits different now than when you taught?

Louise: Well, the children are bused to school, they are picked up, they don't walk home, they don't bring their lunches, they (the schools) have their own lunches, and they have all sorts of extra curricular activities that we never had.

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

Louise: They had a standard they had to make. Nobody approved of smoking. They didn't approve of drinking. Most of them didn't even want teachers to be married. In fact, the first year I taught school, it was in my contract that if I was married I would have to give up my school. When I did get married, the district I was teaching in decided they didn't want a teacher who was married. However, the school district my husband lived in decided they would hire married teachers. In 1936, I was the first married teacher in Mitchell County.

Bertha: What about morals? When you were dating someone did they keep a pretty close watch on you?

Louise: No, you could date anyone you wanted to. What I did after I got through at school was up to me.

Bertha: Were you in charge of any extracurricular activities?

Louise: Well, I had my music programs. For music programs, you had your own numbers and

songs to pick out. Usually, in music, you had the songs and things made up that you wanted to use for those programs. When it came time to have Christmas programs or other programs you always had songs that the whole class knew. You could just say, "Johnny, you take this solo. Mary, you take this one."

Bertha: Was there a problem of teacher turnover? You were telling me about the school that always hired a new beginning teacher.

Louise: The first year I taught school, I taught at Enterprise. It had seven little Kelleys in seven grades and I suppose the district felt like it couldn't afford a lot of money for. . .I don't know what it was. But, anyway, they always hired a beginning teacher. There were a lot of schools in Mitchell County that always hired beginning teachers because they were cheaper. When I first started teaching school the set salary was \$70 a month.

Bertha: At one time, one of your contracts said you could not get married. That could be another reason for teacher turnover. How old were you when you married?

Louise: I was twenty-five when I married. I had been at District 82 for three years when we decided we were going to be married. The school board decided they did not want a married teacher. I had an opportunity to teach over in the district that my husband lived in. I knew that District 82 would not hire a married teacher, so I just told them that I was going to be married, I was going to teach over in his district, and they would need to look for another teacher.

Bertha: Do you ever recall your contract saying that you could not get pregnant while teaching?

Louise: No, I never had a contract that way.

Bertha: Do you know of anyone that ever taught when they were pregnant?

Louise: No, I don't remember any that ever did. Never, that I know of.

Bertha: Did more than one teacher work in the school?

Louise: No, only one.

Bertha: Was there a principal for the school?

Louise: The County Superintendent was our supervisor. He visited the school one period per year.

Bertha: How long did he stay?

Louise: He stayed one period. If he came at one o'clock, he usually stayed until two-thirty and then went on to another school. We would go up to the office quite often. I liked all the superintendents I taught under. On Saturday afternoons we would go up to the office for books or to visit for awhile. We had a real good relationship, always. I think all the teachers had a real good relationship with the County Superintendent.

Bertha: What evaluation system was used for the teachers?

Louise: What do you mean by that?

Bertha: How were you evaluated? If you were a good teacher, how did they know you were a good teacher and wanted to keep you? If someone was a poor teacher and they wanted to get rid of that teacher, how was that worked?

Louise: Well, poor teachers, for the most part, were teachers who didn't have their classes, didn't get children through their books, didn't have any supervision, didn't have any order, and didn't do any playground supervision. Since I did all of these things automatically, I didn't have to worry. Well, all my teachers had done it that way. I don't ever remember ever having a rural school teacher who didn't go out and play with the kids. I don't ever remember not getting through our subjects. We always got through. Why, now days, my granddaughter finished a year and they were not half way through the books. I don't see how they got by with it. They couldn't have done it years ago. They waited until the last

minute and the kids had to study all night. I can't figure it out. I don't think I would make a very good teacher now days. They probably would kick me out.

Bertha: I don't think so. I think you would be welcomed with open arms. How were discipline problems with the children handled?

Louise: Well, the teacher usually handled them herself in her own way. Like this little boy who didn't want to play baseball. He sat on the steps at recess. The teacher usually handled her own discipline problems.

Bertha: Now, from what I have visited with you, you were a teacher who did not use physical discipline.

Louise: Oh, no.

Bertha: I was interested in what you said about the little boy who said he didn't like to play baseball. Tell me about it.

Louise: Oh, yes. The first day of school, I think he thought he was going to revise the whole school or something. He said,

"Teacher, I don't like to play baseball. We played baseball all last year and I don't like to play baseball." I said, "Alright, Johnny, you can set on the steps at recess. The rest of them want to play baseball and we'll just play baseball." So he stayed on the steps for morning recess and dinner and afternoon recess. The next day he just loved it (baseball).

Bertha: From what you have visited with me about your discipline, this is the way it went with you all the time. You did it in a very kind way.

Louise: You know, once I had a little boy who got some new boots. He was "skling" around all over. He came in, skiled right up to the stage, and sat down. Oh, it was funny, and everybody laughed. I said, "Well, Max, you just look so comfortable setting there and if it's so much fun, you just reach right in there, get your books, and you can sit there this period." He walked in the next time.

Bertha: Did the female teachers handle discipline differently from the male teachers.

There were several male teachers.

Rawleigh Weir taught for years. Velve Mann and Orvil Borne taught. There were several male teachers and they were good teachers.

Bertha: They did not physically discipline the children. Did they discipline like you did?

Louise: Yes, they did.

Bertha: Where did you live while teaching at the one school where you boarded in the district?

Louise: Do you know where the buffalo are raised?

Bertha: Yes, I do.

Louise: I stayed one mile south of the school with Charlie and Mirna Kelley on the farm where the buffalo are now raised. I had that mile to walk. It was the coldest mile I ever walked in my life. I was up there not very long ago, and the road kind of angles up and goes on over. When you got over that bluff, you darn near froze to death.

Bertha: The wind really hit you, didn't it?

Louise: I remember one morning, I was so cold I couldn't even get the door open. Quinten Kelley brought Bernice and said, "What's the matter, teacher?" I said, "My fingers are frozen." He got the door open, went in, and started the fire for me. But, oh, that was cold. That was the coldest mile. Lots of times Mrs. Kelley would make the boys take me to school, but they couldn't get the car started.

Bertha: How much schooling did you have in order to teach?

Louise: Well, I graduated from high school. Two years later I went to the University of Colorado for ten hours. Then I went to Manhattan three years or three summers. Then I went to Abilene Review School.

Bertha: Were you required to go to college to renew your certificate?

Louise: Yes, you were required to do that. I was required to renew it every two years.

Bertha: You renewed your certificate with eight hours of college during the summer.

Louise: Yes, every two years. Then I went to the Abilene Review School and got a state certificate. I renewed my certificate by correspondence several times. Then I got an elementary provisional.

Bertha: What was the difference between a state and a county teaching certificate?

Louise: On a state certificate you took an examination in 16 subjects. If you passed you got a state certificate. Then you renewed it.

Bertha: What did you have before you got your state certificate?

Louise: Normal training that came from high school.

Bertha: Did your state certificate give you any leverage in asking for a high salary?

Louise: No.

Bertha: It was just something you could renew?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: Let's go over school district and community. Why was the school built?

Louise: It was the first school in Mitchell County.

Bertha: What were the boundaries of the school's jurisdiction?

Louise: Schools were built within a two mile radius. It was within walking distance.

Bertha: How was it decided who went to school there?

Louise: Any child that was in that jurisdiction went to that school.

Bertha: Did this change for any reason?

Louise: If there was a river or something that caused irregular boundaries, the children would go to a school that was closer.

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

Louise: Well, yes, I'd say so. A lot of times they would hold elections, and we always had our programs there. Track meets were also held there.

Bertha: It was mainly elections, track meets, and programs. Did they ever have a social gathering for someone's wedding celebration?

Louise: They did a couple of times. They did have a shower for a needy family one year.

Bertha: It was open for community things, or as a meeting place if it was needed. Was there a school board for your school? How many members were on it? Do you remember any of these school board members?

Louise: Yes, we did. There were three board members. Some of the board members were Orville James, Jack Wessling and Gerald Smith. They are all deceased now.

Bertha: Did your school have any organization like the PTA where the parents got together?

Louise: No, we did not have a PTA. They supported us as a group.

Bertha: That was typical of the 1930s and 1940s. They were supportive of you because they were glad you were there.

Louise: After you teach a year or two, they pretty much turn things over to you.

They think you have the training and you just run the school.

Bertha: They respected you, but first of all you had to prove yourself.

Louise: Yes, after you got a year or two "under your belt", you were on your own.

Bertha: Who hired and fired the teachers?

Louise: The school board.

Bertha: That was their decision?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: Did anyone else have any input?

Louise: Some parents may have talked to the board.

Bertha: Did any activities take place between schools?

Louise: Yes, there were track meets and spelling bees.

Bertha: Are there any controversies surrounding the first school in Mitchell County?

Louise: No.

Bertha: Did the school make any lasting contributions to the community?

Louise: I think the students that graduated have become substantial citizens.

Bertha: Why did the school close?

Louise: Because of consolidation in 1945.

Bertha: When was the schoolhouse built?

Louise: District 1 was built in 1896 at a cost of \$732.75.

Bertha: Who built it?

Louise: The district.

Bertha: That was fascinating that you had that information.

Louise: Well, you see I started this report for Mr. Cloefield's School Journal in 1940. I went to the courthouse to get this. There was not much information. The oldest written record is the 4th Annual Report written by J. R. Sims, Clerk of District 1, dated August, 1874. I did find out that it was built in 1896 for \$732.75.

Bertha: What materials were used to build the schoolhouse?

Louise: Native stone.

Bertha: Where did the material come from?

Louise: The stone was quarried around here somewhere. It was native limestone.

Bertha: Was this a public school?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: What type of heating, lighting, and toilets were available?

Louise: It had a large parlor furnace for a stove. We did have electric lights. The toilets were outside.

Bertha: How did the school get its water?

Louise: A cistern was near the school.

Bertha: Did you get the water and then have the children use their own cups?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: Did they take them home to wash them?

Louise: I always did that. I had a hot plate. On Friday, I would get a dish pan of water and wash them all. They were ready Monday.

Bertha: What is the significance of the school name?

Louise: It was the first school in Mitchell County.

Bertha: Describe the interior of the school.

Louise: It was a long school with a stage. Underneath the platform was a door

leading to a basement. That was where we kept the coal. You did not have to go outside to get it. It also had a balcony. The children could bring their dolls and things and play up there.

Bertha: What kind of desks were in the school?

Louise: Just the regular desks.

Bertha: Were they bolted to the floor?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: Did you have single or double desks?

Louise: One to a desk.

Bertha: Who was in charge of the up-keep of the building, such as painting the trim or putting in new windows?

Louise: The school board furnished material needed and paid the teacher. We had the dusting and boards to wash and the floor to sweep. We had to bring the fuel in and the ashes to take out.

Bertha: What fuel did you use to start the fire?

Louise: I just had cobs. I would put a couple of them in a can of kerosene at night, and by morning they would take off. You would have a roaring fire in just a little while.

Bertha: Did you burn coal?

Louise: Yes.

Bertha: What special events happened at the school?

Louise: We had the track meets there. We had our Christmas programs there.

Bertha: What physical changes occurred to the schoolhouse during the years you taught there?

Louise: None.

Bertha: Did any physical change take place before you taught there?

Louise: They put in electricity. They had not had REA (Rural Electrical Association) too many years before that. They put electricity in about two or three years before I came.

Bertha: What year would that have been?

Louise: Franklin Roosevelt signed that REA bill in 1933, but it wasn't until several years later. So it must have been in 1937 or 1938.

Bertha: What has happened to this schoolhouse after you quit teaching?

Louise: They continued to hold school there until after the 1945-46 term. Then they had consolidation.

Bertha: What has happened to it since then?

Louise: It is still standing and the equipment and supplies were sold at a school auction.

Bertha: That was a lot of history sold.

Louise: I should say so.

Bertha: Is it used at all today?

Louise: It is still there. It went back automatically to the Smith family who owns the land surrounding it. Just like the Hyde School went back to my family. We've kept up Hyde School pretty well. Keith Waggoner practices his band out there. Of course, they are so loud they don't want them in town.

Bertha: This section is on finance. Was the land purchased or given to the school?

Louise: It was given to the school. My grandfather gave an acre of land for Hyde School. I think the Smith family gave an

acre of land to be used for school purposes, too.

Bertha: Where did they get the funds for construction of the school?

Louise: The funds came from taxes.

Bertha: Did the community help finance the construction?

Louise: I am sure they did through taxes. They may have contributed labor, sand, and rock.

Bertha: How much did it cost a student to enroll, including their books and supplies?

Louise: I don't know.

Bertha: What was your salary when you first started teaching?

Louise: My salary was \$70 a month.

Bertha: What was your salary your last year of teaching?

Louise: It was \$150 a month.

Bertha: It doubled in 17 years to \$150 in 1944-45. How was your salary determined?

Louise: The school board, by taxation, would set aside so much money. They then decided how much was for lights, fuel, salary, and maintenance. They had to pretty much

pay whatever a teacher asked. They offered me that and since I was the only one available, they may not have had school if I had not taught at Solomon Rapids. I took it. I did not have a reason not to.

Bertha: You did not bargain for an increase in salary?

Louise: No.

Bertha: Because you knew they needed a teacher for that term?

Louise: I felt that it was a pretty good salary. They offered the best they could. It was probably the salary of the teacher who resigned. The salary was offered to me even though I did not have a certificate. I took correspondence during the year to earn the elementary provisional that I never did use.

Bertha: How did you get your pay check?

Louise: The clerk would send it to all board members, and they would sign it.

Bertha: They would have a meeting at someone's house?

Louise: No, I think it was automatic that the clerk would send a draft to someone on the school board to sign. Two had to sign the draft and then the treasurer would write out my check.

Bertha: Did they bring it to you at the schoolhouse?

Louise: No, I would have to go after it.

Bertha: You had to go after it?

Louise: I had to walk in mud, sleet, and snow. I got stuck and everything else going to get that check. That was unnecessary. Later years they would sometimes bring it to the school. Some of them had children in school and they would bring it with them. They would not bring the check, but they would bring the voucher. They were like a messenger from the board.

Second Interview

Bertha: This is our second interview, July 8, 1989. We are here in Mrs. Dooley's home. We are going to be visiting about some things that she remembers about her schools as she looks through her year-end

reports from the Clerk of the District Court. Tell us some things about your childhood. In your family, what order of birth were you?

Louise: My brother was older, I was next, then I had another brother and sister. They are all gone.

Bertha: What was your older brother's name?

Louise: My older brother's name was Charles. He died in 1953 of a blood clot. My husband and I and our little girl were living here and we moved to the farm. We stayed there for 26 years. My mother was an invalid. She died three years later, in 1956. In 1979 we moved back here to town. We turned the farm over to my daughter and her husband who was a heavy equipment instructor for the Vo-Tech.

Bertha: When was your second brother born?

Louise: My older brother Charles was born in 1909 and my younger brother Gerald was born in 1918. He died of scarlet fever in 1926. My sister, Irene, was born in 1920. She died of a blood clot in 1966.

Bertha: What do you remember about your childhood growing up?

Louise: Well, I remember that I had a very good childhood. We lived on the farm. We had chickens to take care of and eggs to gather. As I got older, we milked cows, did the separating, and took care of the cream. I remember helping care for my brother and sister. During our high school years, we helped my father on the farm. I can remember cultivating corn. I can remember helping cook for harvesters and thrashers. That was always a big deal. Milking cows was always a must. Taking care of chickens and making butter was a must. It was always my job, when I got home from school, to bake something for our lunch buckets. About every night it was a cake of some kind. Pies didn't go very far. Usually, I baked a cake every night. We had lots of cream. We had lots of chocolate cake. We would have it for supper and of course we would have it for

our lunch buckets. We always took our school lunches. Even in high school, we took our school lunches. We never had hot lunches. I stayed at home for several years after I taught. I boarded at the district at Enterprise the first year I taught. I stayed at home the rest of the years. Then in 1930, I went to college. I went to the University of Colorado. It is a lovely school. It was lovely weather. I took ten hours out there. Two years later I went to Kansas State. I went there several years. After we were married, I went to Abilene Review School and got a state certificate. We took 16 subjects. We went from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night. It was a long day. The examinations were so hard they flunked more than half of the teachers. Teachers were not getting anything anyway. Some were getting \$50 a month. One teacher told me that it was the best thing that ever happened to her.

She went to work in a cafe and between her tips and what she made, she made twice as much as she would have made teaching school, because we all had to maintain cars. We had to buy a car about every so often. There were always tags to buy, insurance to keep, and gas to buy. Really, we didn't make very much. We made about enough that we could afford to go to college every other year. We didn't dress very extravagantly. Most of us had home-made clothes. The children, during the depression years, didn't have overshoes. There wasn't enough money to fix their teeth or to buy glasses. They came to school lots of time without mittens or overshoes. It was pretty sad. There just wasn't any money. Families didn't have anything.

Bertha: What do you remember about the stock market crash on October 29, 1929?

Louise: I remember that I had just received my paycheck. Of course, you know, you always have bills to pay. I came to town

on Saturday expecting to cash my paycheck and you couldn't get any money. I don't remember how long that was tied up. I do remember that I had to borrow money from my mother, who always had a little "nest egg" of butter and cream money, to buy gasoline for a while until I could get my paycheck cashed.

I remember another time when I didn't get my paycheck for a month or so because the district was out of money and they had to wait for the December taxes to come in.

Of course, I got paid for two months after the taxes came in. You always try to pay your bills to keep your credit good. I remember borrowing from my folks during the depression. Then, my father borrowed from me to pay the thrashers.

Bertha: How did the depression affect your teaching?

Louise: My sister, Irene, was in high school and I had to drive her to and from school in Beloit. Then I would drive eight miles to my school. She was too young to drive

a car. When she got to be a junior and senior, she got to drive the folk's car. We got her through school that way. She wore my clothes, my shoes, and everything I had because times were hard.

Bertha: Tell me about the children during the depression years.

Louise: They didn't have a lot of things. Nobody minded because everybody was in the same boat. They would hand down things and pass around things. It seems like farm families always had big flocks of chickens. They had cows and pigs. The children always had egg sandwiches or deviled eggs or potato salad. I remember getting a great big dish pan, and at recess I would fill it half full of water, put it on the stove, and the children would put their pint jars of cocoa, soup, hamhock and beans, or oatmeal in the pan to heat. By noon it would be hot for lunch. They brought just anything they had for lunch. Along with their egg sandwiches, the hot food

made a nice meal. Cocoa was one thing they brought a lot of because it was something hot to drink. There was not a lot of fruit in lunch buckets. There was not a lot of cakes or pies in lunch buckets because families could not afford to buy sugar. Most of the mothers had big gardens. They canned beans. They always had eggs, potatoes, and fried chicken. They always had bread and butter sandwiches. In the winter they would have baked chicken or chicken and noodles. They survived pretty well.

Bertha: This was the same time the dust storms came. How did the dust storms affect your schooling and your family?

Louise: It was bad because lots of times the storms would come up quickly. I always had six tea towels that I would wet with water and put them over the window to collect the dust. There was always a problem of breathing. You didn't dare let the children out or turn them loose. You had to keep them in the schoolhouse

until their parents came after them. You didn't dare send those children home. They would have probably suffocated or come down with dust pneumonia.

Bertha: How many years did this last?

Louise: That lasted three or four years. Lots of times when storms were bad and we did not have electric lights, we would sing. I would play the piano. Maybe we would have a spelling match or a ciphering match because it was really too dark to study. That dust storm would make it seem like night. There wasn't much you could do about it, you couldn't have classes. Children couldn't see the books. Most of the parents didn't even come after their children. We always had the understanding that if it got bad, they would stay in the schoolhouse. I didn't even let them go out after a drink of water. If they had to go to the bathroom, they had to go. If they were little kids, I always sent a big kid with them. I would stand outside until they

got back because they could hear my voice. It was dangerous.

Bertha: Did you have to teach while all of this was going on?

Louise: Oh, yes, it was a bad, bad time.

Bertha: Can you tell us anything about the Jackrabbit hunts during the dust bowl years?

Louise: I wasn't much in favor of them. They got the Jackrabbits in a pen and clubbed them to death. I didn't think that was very good for children to see. On March 25, 1935, the schoolboard decided to let school out one day to have a Jackrabbit hunt. When the school board says you are going on a Jackrabbit hunt, you go on a Jackrabbit hunt. That morning the dust storm came up really fast. It was the worst dust storm in Mitchell County. They did not have the Jackrabbit hunt. They never scheduled another Jackrabbit hunt after that.

Bertha: What did they do with the Jackrabbits?

Louise: I think they gave them to state schools.
I know in the first World War they sent
the jackrabbit meat to Fort Riley to feed
the soldiers.

Bertha: When did the dust storms end?

Louise: The rains came in the fall of 1936, right
after wheat planting time. I remember
the farmers planting wheat with no hope.

Bertha: Farmers sort of got back on their feet
and things were happening in Europe. Did
you hear of events happening in Germany?
Did your family discuss any of this, that
you recall?

Louise: Oh, yes, they were very concerned. It
hadn't been too many years since the
first World War. We could all remember
that. They were very concerned about
those things, but, what can you do?

Bertha: Speaking of the Japanese, what do you
remember about December 7, 1941?

Louise: I remember, I believe, it was a Sunday.

Bertha: Yes, it was.

Louise: I had gone to church that morning and
nothing was said. My husband came home

for dinner and we ate dinner. After dinner, the church bells started to ring and the fire whistles started to blow. We thought, "What in the world is the matter?" Of course, we had the radio on but we heard nothing. So, I told Don to go down to the garage where the men congregate. You know, where the men congregate, you can always hear the news. When he came back, he said Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

Bertha: How did the war affect your school?

Louise: Gas was rationed. Tires, sugar, and meat were also rationed. I know that I needed a new tire for my car or a used tire or some tire. I had to go to the rationing board to make an application. I had to take my car up so they could see the big bulge in the tire. I told them I couldn't start to school with that car because I had to have another tire. I got a retread. We could only get so much gas. Things were just rationed.

Bertha: As you look through those year-end reports, why don't you comment about them?

Louise: Laban District 16 was a nice district. The seats were all on skids. You could move them out. Every two weeks, the district had a card party that everybody attended. They would have cake and coffee, pie and coffee, or sandwiches and coffee. The two years I spent there were some of the happiest years of my life. My husband and I would go out every Friday night; sometimes we would take another couple from town. We always knew who was coming so we would have enough tables. The children also played cards. Very often when it was bad outside, we would play pinoche or pitch during school. All the parents accepted it. Sometimes we would move the desks out and the children would roller skate around the stove. There were only five in the school so they had plenty of room. It was quite a large school.

Bertha: Did you have the children make tea towels?

Louise: Oh, yes. We had an art exhibit at District 82 and won first place in Mitchell County. We filled the south window of the McDonald's store. We didn't do too much at District 1 because I had too many students.

Bertha: The hot lunch program started while you were teaching in the rural school. How did that work?

Louise: It was during the war and they had commodities. Really, it was quite a job. The school board would buy soups in the winter months. I heated the soup on my hot plate. We served mostly soups. When I was teaching District 32, the children didn't have very much. I would buy soups. They would bring milk or something and I would make potato soup, salmon soup, or vegetable soup. We always had soups or cocoa. I had two little children whose mother had died. This business of taking a big

pan of water to heat food in wouldn't work very well because they only had bread and butter sandwiches.

Bertha: How old were the children?

Louise: They were fourth and fifth graders. We had soup the year around.

Bertha: You did have children without a mother or a father?

Louise: Yes, but it wasn't so common as it is today.

This is District 100. We didn't do much art work there. They were for the most part a very studious group. Brad Francis Cotter went to school there. He's the one who passed away just two weeks ago.

Bertha: Do you recall when World War II ended in 1945?

Louise: Yes, I recall that day. The bells rang and the whistles blew. We had been looking for it. I just remember that everybody was happy and everybody breathed a sigh of relief. We decided we would go on with our lives.

Bertha: That's what everyone had to do because life is for the living!

Louise: They phased out the rationing programs.

Bertha: You and your husband were married in 1936. When did you adopt your daughter?

Louise: We were forty years old when we adopted our daughter in 1951. You had to own a home and you had quite a few stipulations before you could adopt a child. You know, with the wages we got, we didn't buy many homes very early. We bought this home in 1938, two years after we were married. It took us some years to pay for it.

Bertha: Would you like to make a concluding statement about education or school?

Louise: Well, I think, basically we have to get back to teaching geography and phonics. We need to teach children to read, spell, and work math problems that they are going to need in life. I think computers are alright, but, I don't think we are always going to have computers around to figure out how much five and one-half

dozen eggs are going to cost. I think the future of education lies in going back more to the basics. I think we have too many activities. There is too much emphasis on sports and not enough emphasis on being able to read and write so you can read a check you give to somebody. I gave a high school student a \$10 check for graduation and when I looked at his signature I had to look back to see to whom I had made it.

Bertha: Did you have a favorite saying or thought for the day?

Louise: I always had this saying in front of the room in every school I taught, "It is not for school but for life we learn." I feel this is still the best advice.