

Fort Hays State University

## FHSU Scholars Repository

---

College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse  
Oral Histories

Archives Online

---

1992

### Interview with Carolyn Lawrence

John R. Levin

*Fort Hays State University*

Carolyn Lawrence

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ors>

#### Content Disclaimer

The primary source materials contained in the Fort Hays State University Special Collections and Archives have been placed there for research purposes, preservation of the historical record, and as reflections of a past belonging to all members of society. Because this material reflects the expressions of an ongoing culture, some items in the collections may be sensitive in nature and may not represent the attitudes, beliefs, or ideas of their creators, persons named in the collections, or the position of Fort Hays State University.

---

#### Recommended Citation

Levin, John R. and Lawrence, Carolyn, "Interview with Carolyn Lawrence" (1992). *College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories*. 137.

<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ors/137>

This Audio Recording is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives Online at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository.

## CHAPTER II

### INTERVIEW NARRATIVE

Carolyn (Adams) Lawrence began her teaching career in a one room school house located seven miles south, one mile east and one mile south of Dighton, Kansas in Lane county. This school was called the Pleasant View school. She had come to Kansas from Oklahoma to look for a job because she had two friends who were teaching in the Healy district. The job she came to look at was a first grade job in Healy, but when she got there that job was already taken. She inquired to see if there were any other teaching jobs available and learned that the one room, one teacher school at Pleasant View was open. She went out and interviewed with the board and county superintendent. The day she interviewed the wind was blowing dirt terrible; it did not look like a very promising place for a twenty two year old woman to be taking her first teaching job. When Carolyn saw the conditions and the location, she was not impressed. After the interview she had decided she did not want the job at all. When Carolyn left Oklahoma to come to Kansas, her parents thought she was just going to visit. They had no idea that she was looking for a teaching job; they wanted her to

finish her degree before she took a job. At that time you could get different level teaching certificates. She had 100 hours of credit and held a 98 hour teaching certificate; you could also get a 60 hour certificate. The county superintendent called to tell her that she had the job and her mother took the message. Needless to say, she was in a lot of trouble. Even after all the trouble she had gotten herself into and the undesirable location and conditions, she moved to Kansas that fall to start her teaching career.

Carolyn earned college credit from the Oklahoma College for Women in Chickasaw, Oklahoma where she attended for one year. She then transferred to Panhandle A&M in Goodwell, Oklahoma where she earned her 98 hour certificate, and later earned her Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education. Carolyn started teaching at Pleasant View in 1957 and went back to Panhandle in the summers and finished her degree in 1960, which was the last year she taught at Pleasant View.

When she first started teaching, teachers had to go back to school every three years for five hours of college credit to renew their teaching certificates. She had to attend a college because at that time there were no out-reach classes.

The students that she had in class ranged in age from five to thirteen years old. She taught first through eighth grade at this school. The students that she had in class had a very good attitude, education was very important to them as well as their parents. Parents were very involved with the educational process. They didn't have as much to do then and there were not as many sports and activities to interfere; all they played was softball. Parents were very supportive; they backed her on whatever decisions she made concerning their children.

All the children that attended Pleasant View went on and attended high school, boys and girls alike. By this time farm work was beginning to take a little less time and parents were beginning to realize the importance of a high school education.

Some students who attended this school had to travel about eight miles. Their parents would bring them to school in the morning and come and get them in the afternoon. There were no bus routes or reimbursements; it was up to the parents to make sure the students got to school. When Carolyn was teaching at Pleasant View there were some other one-room school houses that were pretty close. Other communities also

had them so most students didn't have to travel a long distance to school. Land for the purpose of setting the location of schools was divided into units, and each unit could have a school if the student population was sufficient to support it. The location of the Pleasant View school was somewhat controversial in that the neighbors didn't all get along very well. Past history of the school supported that some of the people in the community became upset with the location of the school and during one night moved the school to another location south of the original location. After waking up to find the school missing the other group of community members proceeded to move the school back to its original location. The community that Carolyn worked for got along much better than that and things ran a lot smoother for her system. The school now sets west of the Dighton Grade School in the city of Dighton; it is owned by Presley Herndon and is being rebuilt into a home.

The first year Carolyn taught at Pleasant View she had 12 students from first through eighth grades. She taught the basics to all the students, they had reading, social studies, mathematics, science and English. She focused a lot of time on

the first grade to try and give them the foundation they needed to get through the rest of the grades. She thought it was very important that these first graders had a strong reading and writing foundation to build the rest of the subject areas on. She spent a lot of time on reading and comprehension in the lower grades. She had a table where she would bring a grade level or subject area to go over a lesson with them. After she felt that the younger kids had an adequate foundation, she would correlate two or three of the grade levels for one subject area. She would take the first, second, and third graders all together and teach them social studies. She always taught reading, English and mathematics in the morning and saved social studies and science for the afternoons. They did a lot of hands on experiments in science so that made a good afternoon class.

The district supplied the textbooks for each subject area. Many of these books were not for a specific grade level. When Carolyn didn't have a text book for a specific grade level, she would adapt the material to fit the needs of the students in that grade. Students did not have to purchase books; they were all furnished by the district, and there was not a rental fee. As far

as having worksheets and copied material they didn't use that, she had an old copy machine, but she didn't use it. Most of their written work was either done out of the book on notebook paper or written on the board. They did a lot of board work. She assigned some home work and allowed some time to get it done. If the students didn't get it done they would either take the work home or stay after school and finish it. Parents were very cooperative when it came to keeping a student after school to work on homework. If she requested for a student to stay after school the parents usually let them.

She would talk with the parents about the promotion of the student to the next grade level. In most cases, she could provide enough extra help to give the student the skills needed to be promoted into the next grade. The state and county gave the eighth graders a promotion test that they had to pass to get into high school. The eighth graders at Pleasant View would go into Dighton and go through the eighth grade graduation ceremonies with the Dighton eighth graders.

Carolyn handles discipline today the same way that she handled it when she taught in the one-room school house. If a

child gives any problems in the classroom, they would go with Carolyn to the telephone. The student would call their parents and explain why they were calling, and they would get to the bottom of the problem as quickly as possible and get back to what they were supposed to be doing. The discipline problems that Carolyn had while she taught at Pleasant View were very few. Parents were stricter then, and students knew if they got in trouble at school they would be in trouble at home also.

She gave out report cards much like they use today; they were broken down into grade level. The report card not only showed the academic progress of the student, but it also showed the social interaction skills, citizenship and general behavior of the student. At the end of the year they would have an awards banquet to recognize those students who maintained high grades through out the year.

Carolyn had to deal with special needs students the best way she knew how; that is one of the reasons she specialized in reading. She believed then and still does believe that if a student can learn to read well and has good comprehension skills they will have a lot less trouble in school. She provided extra



assistance to the children that had trouble in a certain area. There weren't any special education programs to deal with special students.

School started in September. They had an eight month school year so they got out in April. The three years Carolyn taught at Pleasant View they had eight month school years. They didn't have any trouble getting the work done that they needed to do because there weren't any activities or sports to interfere with getting the academics taken care of. The summers were longer because of the farming community. The children had to help their parents with the summer farming activities. Some of the schools had a nine month school year, but most of the rural schools were eight month schools. They started school at 8:30 in the morning and got out at 3:00 in the afternoon. All the students brought their own lunches. Sometimes, if it were a special occasion, parents would bring over soup or something and feed the kids a hot lunch. They took a thirty minute lunch break every day and after lunch they had a fifteen minute recess break. Carolyn got to school at about 7:45 a.m. They had electricity, but they used a pop-bellied stove for

heat. They burned wood and coal. Carolyn was not accustomed to this kind of heating but she got accustomed to it. She had an interesting story about the wood burning stove: they were all sitting around the wood burning stove, and Carolyn was reading the students a story. There later was an outbreak of measles, and she got them. She blamed it on the pop-bellied stove because they had to sit so close to keep warm. She had two student helpers each week that helped her carry out the custodial duties. They liked doing this so she had no trouble at all getting them to do the work. The students were in charge of cleaning the ashes out of the stove and carrying the wood and coal, and she was in charge of lighting the stove. During the lunch hour recess the student helpers would help her clean and do whatever needed doing. She would usually sweep the floors each night before she went home. The bathrooms were outside and not modern the first two years that she taught, but by the beginning of the third year they were adding on to the building and the bathrooms were the first thing they added. They did have running water inside the building, but it was a hand pump. The students liked to pump the water. There was always a volunteer

for that. Carolyn usually stayed around until about 4:00 or 4:30 and worked on lesson plans or graded papers.

Every year she would put on a Christmas program, a spring program and a box supper. They used the box supper as a money maker to buy softball equipment and books for the library. She was in charge of putting the programs together with the help of a music teacher. The district hired a music teacher to come in three times a week to give the students music. Carolyn would take the first, second and third graders out to recess while the music teacher had music with the rest of them, and then Carolyn would take the other group while the music teacher taught music to the group that had been at recess. The music teacher was Lena Ruth Speer, a parent of one of the students.

The Pleasant View School was just one room with a porch built on the front of it. It was a wooden structure outside, and inside it had white stucco walls. The building was maintained by the school board. Each student had their own desk. Carolyn had a reading table where she would take a subject group to go over a lesson with them. This table was at the back of the room behind the desks so the students who were not at the table could

not see the students who were at the table. The building was later updated after she left. Carolyn mentioned the adding of the bathrooms; later they added a kitchen and a propane stove for heat.

The only cost associated with going to school was what it cost for transportation to get the students to school. The district bought all the books and paid for all the utilities and upkeep to the building, although the board members did do some of the work on the building.

When Carolyn started teaching at the Pleasant View school there were no fringe benefits tied to the salary. They got a straight teaching salary; she started out teaching for \$3,400.00 a year for an eight-month contract. Every year after that for about six years, she got a \$500.00 a year raise. It was strictly up to the board of education and the county superintendent to decide what raises teachers would get. There were always jobs open so she told them they better give her a raise or she would find a job some place else. They were good about giving raises as long as they thought they had a good teacher. Each district that had a one-room school house had their own money because

the board of education wrote Carolyn's check. The county superintendent would drop by once a month. Carolyn never knew when she was going to drop in. She was the one who formally evaluated Carolyn and recommended her for renewal. The superintendent answered to all of the rural boards of education. At that time Edith Caldwell was the county superintendent, she had taught at Pleasant View before she took the superintendent's job.

A typical day at Pleasant View would start with Carolyn arriving at school around 7:45 a.m. She would light the stove if it was a cold day and prepare for the students to start arriving. The first thing they would do after the students were all there is have the flag salute. After the Pledge of Allegiance they would start their school work. Carolyn would have reading for everyone first thing in the morning, followed by mathematics, and then English. They would have a morning recess whenever it would fit between two of the subjects. She saved social studies and science for the afternoon because they did a lot of experiments. They had lunch and a noon recess from 11:45 to 12:30. They had an afternoon recess some where about the

middle of the afternoon. They did play an organized sport, they played softball against some of the other one-room school teams in the area. They usually practiced for these games during their recess time. After the students had gone home Carolyn would usually clean up a little and sweep the floor and maybe grade some papers and prepare for the next day. She usually left for her home in Dighton by about 4:00 or 4:30.

The years she spent teaching at the Pleasant View school were very good years. She enjoyed the kids and their parents. It was a good community. That job provided the foundation for a life long enjoyable career in teaching.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Carolyn (Adams) Lawrence was born in Buffalo, Oklahoma in 1931. Carolyn's father and mother, Joyce and Vernon Adams owned a grocery store, and farmed in the Buffalo area. Carolyn has two sisters, Marilyn Roberts of Claremore, Oklahoma, and Glenda Bennett of Denver, Colorado.

Mrs. Lawrence attended grade school and high school in Laverne, Oklahoma. She attended Oklahoma College for Women in Chickasaw, Oklahoma for one year. Mrs. Lawrence then transferred to Panhandle A&M in Goodwell, Oklahoma where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. Mrs. Lawrence's emphasis was in general science and history, and she later earned her reading specialist from Fort Hays State University.

Mrs. Lawrence has taught in the rural school districts of Pleasant View, Amy and Alamota. She has taught first through ninth grade, as well as; carrying out administrative duties in some of the schools where she taught. Mrs. Lawrence coached basketball, softball and track while teaching in the rural

schools. Mrs. Lawrence's expertise in the area of reading led to her being asked to help set up the first Title 1 reading program in the Dighton schools. Before leaving teaching to raise her family, she worked as a part time reading teacher in the new reading laboratory at Dighton Grade School. After substituting teaching for several years Mrs. Lawrence decided to get back into the education field, she has been teaching third and fourth grade in the Healy School District for the past nine years.

Mrs. Lawrence and her husband Howard have a farming and cattle operation north of Shields, Kansas. They have three children Kymberly of Garden City, Kansas, Kamala of Guam, and Stacy of Shields, Kansas. Mrs. Lawrence also has two grandchildren K.J. and Paige who she loves to spend time with.

Mrs. Lawrence's dedication to family and the educational well being of other children keeps her motivated and always ready to meet new challenges. When asked about her future plans she replied I'm the big 6-0 and I love what I'm doing, I have no plans to retire, maybe when I'm 65. Mrs. Lawrence has touched, and will continue to touch many lives, we are blessed to have her in our community.