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1985

### Interview with Frank Randel

Kris Randel Waldren  
*Fort Hays State University*

Ira Frank Randel

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#### Recommended Citation

Waldren, Kris Randel and Randel, Ira Frank, "Interview with Frank Randel" (1985). *College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories*. 46.  
<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ors/46>

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ORAL HISTORY

Ira Frank Randel  
Diamond Ridge School  
1931-1939

Submitted by

Kris Randel Waldren

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for the course  
History of American Education

July 23, 1985

The following is an oral history given by Frank Randel. It is for partial fulfillment of the requirements of the course History of American Education taught by Dr. Alan Miller, summer of 1985.

Mr. Randel, uh, where did you go to school and what years did you attend there.

I attended Diamond Ridge School, District 81, Franklin County, Kansas from 1931 until 1939. I attended there eight years. Diamond Ridge was one of the typical one room schools of this particular time in the state of Kansas. The particular school was named Diamond Ridge because of its physical location on top of a ridge that came to a point in back of the building where a number of large draws came together. The school had originally started as a one room school in the late nineteenth century. I had uncles and aunts that attended this particular school and it served its purpose from late in the nineteenth century until the time my youngest sister started to school. And the year she started to school consolidation in Kansas closed the one room schools in most of Franklin county and the people sent their children into public schools.

However, at the time I started to school there were sixty-six students in the school. There was one teacher. I can still remember there were eight students who were older than the teacher. That particular time we left for school at eight o'clock and we arrived at school in our particular case at about eight fifteen, at which time we were supposed

to take our seats if we came. School took up at eight thirty. We had recess all during the time I was there, which was fifteen minutes in the morning, fifteen minutes in the afternoon and lunch hour, or noon, or whatever you want to call it, was an hour. The particular school that we attended no one went home at any time during the eight years that I attended this public school for lunch.

Uh, during the time that I attended school we had five teachers. Three of those teachers served during the year that I was in first grade. And the sixty-six students during that particular year dropped from the sixty-six until the next year there were thirty-two. Following this there was a gradual decline until the last four years that I attended school I was the only boy in the school. And the last year I attended there were only six students. There were only three families represented by that time. There were two girls from one family, three girls from another family and myself.

Uh, as far as the time of school or anything changing the only thing that changed from the second grade through sixth grade I had one teacher. And this was the lady who rode out from a town approximately four and a half miles from this school with her brother who was a teacher at the next school north east of us. And, from our school to that school was three miles. And he would let his sister out, go on to his school and pick her up on the way home. If there

happened to be real bad weather or storm or something of this nature they both would stay in the area and would not go back to town.

Uh, the lady, her name was Julia McFadden that taught the school that I attended walked about a hundred yards to the closest house and would stay there if she didn't go back home, to actually her parents home in the close by town. Her brother stayed at a family by the name of Dillon who lived approximately a hundred yards from where the school was situated that he taught in.

At that particular time in our county you could go to another school approximately from three to five miles was the furthest distance to any school in any direction and these were all one room country schools. In that particular area of Franklin County, Kansas at that time there was also a township high school, one of the few that originated in the state of Kansas. And this particular township did not have a town or filling station or anything else situated in the township nor does it have today.

The school under the first three teachers that I mentioned was rather debatable but I can comprehend now. I couldn't at that time of course, but I do now. The first teacher that started the year was a young girl that had just graduated from high school, gone to the county superintendent during the summer and taken normal school training and came out as a teacher. She had had sufficient

grades on her test scores that she was qualified as a teacher in the state of Kansas.

And, with the number of students that she had, and particularly the ones that were older than she was, considerably, we had several people who were quite unhappy with what took place and the whole issue of the lady leaving is still very clear in my mind. She attended one of the honky tonk dances, uh, in one of the rough communities that we had, and we had several of them. This particular dance wasn't even in a town. It was out in the country where if the sheriff raided it why the bootlegger and everybody else could head for the hills and they couldn't go all directions. And there was only one road to the honky tonk and there were so many boulders and rocks approaching the place to get off the road would be a disaster. And if they had lights on everybody saw them coming and the particular building had the sides that would just fold down and they scattered like a covey of quail. And consequently one of the patrons attended the dance and the, the young teacher was there and not only was she attending the dance of this caliber but she was also seen to smoke a cigarette. And, uh, needless to say she didn't show up Monday morning. That was the end of it.

Uh, the next lady that came in and followed was uh, tougher than nails and talking about discipline or anything that took place during the time that I was in school and

with all the students and what have you there, this was the only student that we had that got a spanking. And one young lady got a spanking wham, bam the first day that the teacher was in, the war began and she did not leave quite as readily. The first teacher left in the month of October, the second one fought the battle until the Christmas holidays and, uh, at the Christmas holidays she had had enough of one particular parishoners or patrons, if you will, of the district and, uh, the particular partron happened to be the wife of a board member. My father happened to be a board member and there was many mornings that ,uh, we had finished doing our chores and were in at the table and uh, when a particular car was seen showing up we were told to hurry and get cleaned up and leave for school whether we'd eaten or whether we hadn't. In other words the war path was on and the lady was demanding that the teacher be fired was what it amounted to. And, uh, I can even remember some of the choice comments that her husband made to my father one morning down at the barn. And, uh, you know he said, "I don't really know what we're going to do about this Les, but, my wife is just making life miserable." He, he used a little stronger language than that and ah, some better adjectives to describe his wife and what have you, "but there is no way that a she is gonna run off Miss Hale. Miss Hale is tougher than she is and she is going to make our lives, quote, if we don't do something

about it." Well, Miss Hale finally had enough of the lady that the board did not terminate her, but at Christmas time she said good-bye I'm going to do something else and she did.

Uh, the remainder of that year was taught by a lady who had been dismissed from teaching school before because she pulled the horrible sin of getting married. And, uh, so that was the first time and as a matter of fact the one of the first times that this school district had had a Mrs. And so we had a lady by the name of Nue. Mrs. Nue finished that first particular year of school. She had a family, she lived some distance away. A big distance then, approximately fifteen miles. And, she did drive back and forth to school she did not live in the community, but we did have school the rest of the year.

There were enough people as I say departed from that particular school district the rest of that year that the next year the enrollment was about half and they hired Miss McFadden. Miss McFadden had school for the next five years. And we had school on a very regular basis. Miss McFadden's pet subject happened to be math, uh, her subject that she put off till the very last as I look back through the ages was spelling. All that shows very strongly in my preparation and background as I went on with school. We also did all kinds of little oral games and exercises and what have you when she first came because she had someone



from all eight grades. And, history, geography if you will, reading, math, and writing were every day subjects.

Spelling was the last thing of the day if she got around to it, uh, certain days of the week for certain classes. The only time I was ever really in serious trouble in school was with Miss McFadden and that was when we had a young lady who had been in the eighth grade for about the third year. And, uh, by that time I probably should have known better, I was probably in the fourth or fifth grade. But, I pulled the horrible sin of laughing out loud at some of the idiotic answers she was giving to questions that uh, at that time were given orally and you were asked to recite. In this particular case we happened to be dealing with geography and we not only dealing with geography but we were dealing strictly with local geography. We weren't only just with Kansas we were right down to our own back yard. And, uh, at this particular stage in the young lady's life, which I can still remember, she had no idea of any of the concepts of what county she lived in, what township she lived in, what the local rivers were or anything else, you know, just simple things that went and I pulled the unpardonable sin of boo-booing. I can, I can even remember what the penalty for that was. The penalty was, hurrah I got to clean out the stove and spread the ashes and carry in coal for the rest of the year. It wasn't for the rest of the week, or for the month or anything, it happened to be for the rest of the

year. And, uh, at first that was a big punishment then later on we had a young gentleman who was employed to do that and when it got down to the fact that I was the only boy left in school it was my responsibility, quote, for the remainder of my time in elementary school.

During the little business of our time in school, the idea of this particularly one room school and all of the one room schools around us were they were not just schools but they were also community centers. School was used on a regular basis for what the particularlary called community meetings. And, this was not just a parent-teacher type thing this was the entire community and there were those people in the community who had never had children, or never had children in the school, who were very active and came. And at certain times the responsibility of the students and the teachers to provide entertainment at these programs. Certain times they, uh, took care of community business and there was other times that the adults of the community, uh, performed programs. One of the things that I can remember particularly during the, this particular time, the schools as close as they were, there would be groups of adults who would get together and, uh, go into three act play production. And, if they had a play that was, uh, particularly successful well then they would trade around with their neighboring schools. And in our particular case the schools that they invariably traded around with was very

close by. Fairview was the first close school on the northeast, the first one southeast was Oakland, uh, the first one northwest was Dean, the one directly north was Cargee, uh, the one southwest of them was north Pomona, uh, they also continued for some reason or other to associate during the time I was in school with a school by the name of Rock Creek. And that's where the Mrs. Nue came from and when she left Diamond Ridge after finishing out the first year went back and her local school hired her back as teacher in that school. I assume the lady must have been sufficiently strong as a person in our school that the the local people continued to trade, if you will, plays. In other words Diamond Ridge adults would take a play to Rock Creek and Rock Creek would come back with a program at these various community meetings. Most of these programs during the time I was in school any number of these people walked from their home to the other schools. They, they, did not have car. In our particular case we happened to have a car but my family always walked to the various places they went to put on these plays. And, uh, my father was invariably the type of character that if they had a play he was involved. So constantly this became a form of family, if you will, and community entertainment and participation. Rarely could they get my mother involved in a play, in some cases they did, but if they had one my father was involved. And, uh, so we wandered from these schools.

I don't know how it started from there, but once Julia McFadden became our teacher then we also started having trades with these schools and we would have what they considered academic contests. If you will, back to the old spelling matches, geography matches, arithmetic matches and what between the schools. We would go to Fairview, for example and the students from one school was lined up on one side of the room and the ones from the other on the other and you had spell downs or spelling bees. We also had arithmetic matches, we also had geography matches of the same type of thing. It even got to the place that they got carried away that we would diagram sentences and, uh, it become the little ditty of who could make the prettiest little marks on the board and who could do it the fastest. And if you did why you won and the other person sat down. Or, if you had too many participating in a grade why they would start you three or four if they had enough blackboard space. And, uh, this would be something that would be a special occasion. And again these schools were close enough, and money, I assume, was scarce enough that if we went to Fairview the school walked to Fairview. We were never in the situation that we had a cripple or anything that couldn't make the walk. Or if they came to our school it was the same way. There was only one school of this whole group that anyone brought them. And, we had a old bachelor in the area who I later found out that for years

and years and years, uh, had served on the high school board of the area and was responsible to a certain extent for the high school being ...

(Please turn the tape over)

to a certain extent was probably responsible for the high school being rebuilt after they had a fire that destroyed the first frame high school built in the area. And he had a old farm truck that he would bring the students down from the school in their area on occasion to participate with some of the other schools when we had some of these great things such as the spelling bee, the arithmetic matches, the geography matches. And, on occasion they would come even when plays were being given. He was the type of individual that would bring the students down if one of the schools was coming say to our school to give a, their three act play and supposedly this was good. Well, the number of students would be involved like from their school was say eight, nine, ten students. It was never a very particular big school but he was the type of individual who that was very active with this sort of activity the, uh, thing was that the man did the same thing with the high school and with activities at the high school because he was the type that if they had music or drama or anything of this nature he was very supportive and very strong. I found out later on in life that he was not very strong on this thoughts of

athletics and that but things that he felt were academic and, uh, what was important why he contributed to. As a little side light, the man was a bachelor all his life and upon his death he had acquired considerable holdings, quote, as of that time, which he did give to one of the church related colleges in the state of Kansas. And, uh, so from his viewpoint he had a very definite view of what was important in education.

This was one of the things that I suppose as many people tell of horror stories of one room schools. And, I can see how they started from my first year in school. And the number of teachers and the turnover we had the particular teacher we had then for the next five years was very dedicated to education and the idea of, that everyone should be educated, boys, girls and as I knew her through the remainder of her life this was what she dedicated her life too. So, I was very fortunate in the type of teacher that this particular lady was. Um, she left teaching at the time she did to get married and to raise a family. Which she did.

The teacher that followed her had far more formal training as a teacher. As a matter of fact she had a degree where Miss McFadden did not have a degree. She later acquired a degree when her children were older. And, went on and taught school again. But the teacher that I had my last two years in school was really at the particular time

probably more interested in anything than she really was in teaching school. But, she was a school teacher of the time.

Uh, probably as far as saying what did you do to teachers or what didn't you. I probably, uh, contributed to probably more gray hairs in a lady's head than anything else. Nothing to do with school because what we had to do in school was not that difficult but the fact that at noon hours and recess by this time in my life I was the only boy and so I went out and bounced a basketball in the mud or on the side of the schoolhouse and the combination of two was something that drove the poor lady up her wig but, uh, the only thing as far as any punishment or anything else that didn't take place I would have to wash the side of the schoolhouse if there was ever a muddy mark. So if I got in trouble with any of the girls in school why it was real simple. They bounced the ball in the mud and whop it up against the side of the schoolhouse and guess who got to wash it off? You know, I mean this was fun and games. So when you talk about what you did in school and what you remember this, uh, was one of the things that lead to, uh, I don't know I suppose you would say a lot of friendly arguing, uh, with myself and what student, other students there were the last few years I was in school.

The, uh, general trend of this particular school though while I was in it and the students that were there we all walked to school except one family. The, the lady that

wanted the teacher fired so badly the first year they brought their girls to school. And, uh, if it was nice weather the girls would walk home. If it was bad weather why they was to stay until daddy came and got them. Ah, there were times that, ah, daddy didn't get around to come and getting them when he should. This was one of the little ha, ha's of the students in school because daddy probably had a snoot full down at the local bootleggers is what it amounted to. And, uh, didn't get around to it. The, the little thing at the time we, we knew what condition daddy was in, the students at the school did, but we didn't really understand why. Ah, most of us were simplistic enough that we just thought that the man had fire for his chickens all year round. At that particular time we did not realize that that smoke coming out of the chimley[sic] out in the chickenhouse was actually the workings of a local still. But, never the less that was what took place at that particular time.

And, the fartherest that anyone came to our particular school walking was Roundtree family and they lived just almost three miles from school. We did not have the little business of the people who talk about I walked ten miles to school or anything else. We did not. It was not that distance. And, uh, the north wind could be a little biting when you walked into it. Uh, I, I really don't remember anytime from the time I went to school that any family that



lived west of this school that anyone brought their children to school or came and got them. The particular school was setting in the middle of the mile line at the half mile line. And, uh, during the later years I was in school, this particular school was adjacent to my family's place and I could run a trap line and go to school. The thing that I could really cause a great deal of trouble with was make the little action of picking up a skunk or sivit cat or something of that nature and then going on to school. However, I've heard of all the people who were sent home on this that and the other for doing that. I never was, they made fun of me, but nobody ever booted me out and said I had to go home, you know. Uh, it was just one of those things.

The general text of schools any teachers we had were, that they were that they did have a great deal of rule and regulation under direction of county superintendents to follow. And, consequently whenever the county superintendent was coming visiting, and this, this was the thing that always rather mystified me at the time. There were no surprise visits from the county superintendent in the fact that we were told a week or two in advance that the county superintendent would be there. We didn't know what day, and I later kind of suspicioned that the teachers probably used this as a little lever to make certain that ah you were very well prepared. And of course the, if anyone boo-boomed the day that the county superintendent was there

you were in serious trouble not only with the teacher and, but from the rest of the students. But that serious trouble was more a matter being ostracized in that there was any type of punishment or anything of this nature but it was just something that you didn't do. When, ah, when the county superintendent came everybody was to be on their best behavior. And, no matter what subject or anything to be taken up why you were supposed to do well. With looking back, I can very clearly remember that if any student was quizzed or questioned or whatever you want to call it for the quote, "benefit of the good county superintendent", that they were probably quizzed in an area that they were well prepared. There just, there just weren't any boo-boos. Ah, there may be oh some little form of spelling bit or the recitation of important poems or items that we were to memorize and quote from memory and what have you but if we were asked to quote something or to give our little poem or reading you'd better believe it was something that we had already mastered and given. There were no surprises. In other words we did not come up and be dumped with something that was completely foreign or people were not embarrassed or anything of that nature.

Ah, so far as the school all the time that I attended school we had eight months of school. Our school started the day after labor day all the time I attended grade school. The school always started the day after labor day.

I really didn't know what labor day was, other than the next day you went to school. We would get out of school sometime in April. Rarely did we not have school. As a matter of fact the business of school being postponed, I don't, I don't remember there ever being such a word when I attended grade school, or high school. If it happened I just, I just don't remember it. I do not remember us having a teacher that didn't get there, ah, if you went to school and the teacher wasn't there, Stella Hughes was there. In this particular case Stella Hughes was the neighbor lady that lived across the first draw. From her house to the school house was probably about a hundred yards. And if you could get to school Stella Hughes was there and she was there until the day was over or the teacher showed up. But I don't know who made that arrangement. I have no idea how it happened, I don't know whether the school board did, the teacher did or what have you. But, during my years in school I assume Stella Hughes was probably on the average of once, twice at the most a year during the particular years but she was always the lady that was there. She also was, a little side line, was the lady that during my particular time was called if there was a baby in anybody's household. Either she functioned as the midwife while the child was delivered or at least the nursemaid after the child was delivered by the local doctor. Her husband, as a little tidbit of nostalgia go with it, was the local self

proclaimed veterinarian. If anybody had a sick horse why you called for her husband, if somebody was sick you called for her. If somebody didn't know what the treatment was why I don't know whether she was supposed to have a bag of witch's brew or what her particular expertise was but she was just the lady who took care of all those little problems.

The particular people had had a family. I personally only knew the youngest one and she was one of the eighth grade students the year I was a freshman in school. However, apparently she hadn't been the whippiest of students, and she really didn't live far enough away there was no reason that she couldn't attend school. And as I have gotten to know the lady later in my life she was apparently very capable, but she was one of the eighth graders who was older than the teacher. She was an eighth grader who was already twenty-one. And about half way through that particular first year of school she was one of several who got married. And, I don't know whether she ever finished the eighth grade or anything of this nature. I have no idea whether she did or not. But at least her parents, and again she was the youngest of several children, but her parents were the type that the, as I say, one was the local midwife I guess you would say, and the other was the local midwife for pigs, cows and horses and what have you.

But, as far as anything else going wrong at school. If the well didn't work, for example, the man that I just mentioned, his name happened to be Frank Hughes was the man who came over and took care of the well. If, ah, the general condition of the school ground was such that the snakes could hide without being seen he was the man that came with his horses and mowing machine and mowed the school grounds and then he turned around and put the school ground hay or what ever you want to call it for just that, for hay for his cattle. And, on occasion why we would get in trouble by taking some of his hay before he had it put up, and take it out and stuff it in the rock walls. Now the rock walls that I have reference to here is rock fences which was common in the country which I grew up. And, if you grew up in that particular country you knew with grass being stuffed in rock fences that meant that there were skunks there. And, as far as I know, they were the only animal with did that. But, if you grew up in that area and you saw ah, hay or grass or what ever you want to call it, stuffed in rock cracks skunks would do that. And the only thing that we did this for was because we put the local man up the wall because he detested skunks. I don't know what they were supposed to do to him or anything else, but if we would stuff some grass and do a good enough job he wasn't concerned with the loss of the hay but he would be down tearing down his rock fences trying to find the skunks.

Aaah, I don't know, maybe, maybe he wanted the skunks, maybe he wasn't mad at the skunks, maybe he wanted them, I don't know. But, we could sure get a lot of excitement going by stuffing grass in rocks. Well, about the time he began to find some stuffed in that had sticks that somebody had used to stuff it in with and then hadn't removed the sticks why ah, that's when we got in trouble. Ah, we had been stuffing grass in his rock walls again. But this was an activity that would, did not take place on school time, but would take place on our times or on week ends, but was directly related to school enough so that we would be reprimanded for it, but again the reprimanding as far as punishment or what have you would amount to anything. Would be that we would be kept after school for an extra half hour, or hour, or what ever it was and given some horrendous task to do such as memorize a poem or memorize words or write something so many times which normally amounted to hundreds of times and that sort of thing. (phone rings...pause)

As far as the school as a whole that I attended as a one room country school, ah, during the nineteen thirties, in Franklin County, Kansas, the school as far as I know did not change from the time it was built until the time it was eventually torn down. And during the particular time I attended school it was the one room country school, it was a frame building. The heating was a large stove that would burn wood or coal. To burn wood in it it was virtually

impossible to heat the room. And, of course on very cold days it was virtually impossible to heat the room period. There were windows in this particular building on the west and on the east. The north was solid wall, completely covered with chalk board. There was also a stage at the north end where this chalk board. There was a heavy wire strung from high on the walls from which curtains hanged that could be moved out to create the appearance of a theater stage or could be moved back. During school time the teacher's desk, at least the eight years I attended, set on this raised platform or quote "stage", from which the teacher could look back over and apparently had an advantage of seeing over the entire school room. The particular building had the chimney[sic] in the middle of ...

(Please switch to the other tape)

The chimney in the back of the room, which actually was on the south wall of the classroom, was at the division line between the classroom and the cloakroom. The cloakroom was as stated, a place where coats, lunch pails were left. There were two doors going in the cloakroom in the classroom. The one on the as you came in the building on the right, on the east, behind this door and along the wall and what have you was hooks, places that girls hung their coats. On the west behind that door were rows of hooks that boys hung their coats. There were many, many cubicles (clears throat) on the lower part and on the very south wall as you came in. These cubicles was where you were to put your lunch pails or overshoes or anything of that nature, if you happened to be one who wore overshoes.

The north wall of this cloakroom, which would be the backside where the chimney[sic] was, was a table there. On this table were containers that water was stored in. Now, uh, while I was in school, ah, crock water container was obtained that there was a little push button on that you could let water out and get it in your cup, if you had a cup. Prior to this time it had just been a wash pail. I assume someone had decided that this was, uh, not a very good health practice and probably how disease spread and blah, blah. So the water pail and the water dipper went. Uh, the crock jar with the push button spigot came into vogue. Of course the push button spigot always dripped and



so there had to be some kind of a bucket or something under it. And if someone was foolish enough to leave water in it during the late afternoon and there was more water in the crock than the bucket would hold and it leaked too much over the weekend or the night or what have you well there was still wet floors or if someone was foolish enough to let leave water in it on a long weekend it was going to freeze and that was not uncommon.

The front of the building (clears throat) on the south side from the time I attended, and I don't know whether the building was half way wealthy or poverty stricken or what. But anyway there was the sidewalk that came up. There were two humongous hedge posts on either side of this sidewalk and then there were smaller ones in the middle and the object of these were they were spaced close enough together that a horse or a cow could not walk through them. Supposedly human beings could. However, I can remember there were times that we had community get togethers and what have you, particularly due to one family that there happened to be particularly large people, and I do mean large people. Ah, the gate to the school yard was for some reason always open otherwise it never was. And as near as I know why that was for the Bowman family to enter through because it would have been rather difficult for them to get between the, the posts in the sidewalk that came into the front of the building. And, in regards to when I say they

were large people, yes they were. Valentine Bowman, uh, the man in question weighed over four hundred and fifty pounds. And, uh, not only did he weigh over four hundred and fifty pounds but one of the first things I remember about him I can remember struggling with a bale of hay and I really wasn't big enough to do anything with a bale of hay, and this gentleman pitched bales of hay into his hay loft with a pitch fork that he had put on a pipe handle. And, uh, the same thing was true if somebody, you know, wanted to butcher anything of that nature why you would get Valentine Bowman. And if there was any question he would just turn them over himself. Or, they were going to be dehorning some old cows or something of that nature that there might be a contest of strength because people didn't have the modern squeeze chutes and what have you, why you always had Valentine Bowman. And, one problem he may break the neck on the particular prize cow or something, but other than that why he was somebody to have around. Uh, as far as the rest of the physical condition or anything of the school, the school was situated on approximately two acres. And, uh, which is larger try to compare somebody doesn't a city block. As a matter of fact it would have been, it was less than two city blocks. It was bigger than a city block. On the particular premise was a water well. There was a coal house, or coal and kindling shed not too far from the school. There was a horse barn out in the far corner although during all the

time that I attended school there we had a gentleman who always brought hay for his horse, put in one part of the barn because his children were going to ride a horse that year, but I do not ever remember there being a horse in the horse barn during the eight years I attended the school. There were also two so called outhouses. Those, if you will, were the restrooms of the day. The girl's was in the northeast corner of the property and the boys' were in the northwest corner of the property. Ah, I heard of the stories of the people who did come to school with horses in a earlier day and, uh, put a rope around the outhouse. And I do remember this, the doors on them opened out and of course the point of putting the rope around it was if somebody was inside they were tied in. Well there's simpler ways than putting a rope around it. Somebody could put a big rock or post against it, do the same thing. But, during the time I was in school it never happened. Ah, it was the same thing it was with these it was with anything else, if they needed cleaning out this was something that was a community affair. Just the same as when school started every year that was a community enterprise. Word went out and people of the community showed up and cleaned the school. The school was washed, scrubbed, cleaned and what have you. And again, not just children that went to school, or parents of children that went to school, but the people from the community would show. Uh, there was a gentleman I

do not remember ever having anything going on at the school that he did not show up. Ah, he always was there if there was anything that went on at the school. He and his wife were always there although they had no children, never did have any children. They didn't have any children that were older or anything than I was, they just didn't have any children. But if anything happened at the school, Mr. and Mrs. Joe McCurdy were there. They just always were there. And, if they had a rabbit drive in the community they were there, if they had a school house scrubbing they attended. And, I don't know I suppose maybe that was the reason to get together. When people talk about, (paper rustling) you know, what part did the community play and on down the line.

I, since I was in school, have seen the budget of that particular school and there were years that the budget got up to the whole great big sum of five hundred dollars. And, I suppose that was probably fairly good. I hadn't thought anything about it that particular time. I am aware that when I went on to high school that the gentleman that was our high school principal came in one morning and oh, he was elated and what have you he had a brand new car. And, he had just gotten a raise and he was going to be making twenty-five dollars a week. And, um, sounded like an awful lot of money to me. I assumed it was a fortune. But in the process of asking I did find out that the first job he had teaching school that he had taught for twenty-five dollars a

month, was the first job that he had teaching school. So at this particular time he was going to make twenty-five dollars a week and so consequently in celebration he had thought he was affluent also and purchased a new car. And, uh, went on a matter of fact to find out that uh, in order to pay for this car he was also going to have to change his living arrangement. He was going to move from where he had been living where he was paying outlandish rent, five dollars a month, and he was going to move to a lesser house that he was going to rent for three dollars a month. And so, when you, when you compare what things are and what they weren't, uh, kinda the way it goes.

Uh, as far as the particular school that I attended as a one room school people talk about who hired, well there was, the time I attended, there was a school board. There was a three member school board. And, the particular people at that time that I remember this because my father was one of these people during part of the time. They had a director, they had a clerk and they had a treasurer. Ah, these people took care of the business of school. There was a school meeting, annual school meeting, at which time they discussed the issue of school. And, on those particular days school was dismissed which was one day. When I was in school it was in April. And school was dismissed a half an hour early because this business had to take place at three thirty in the afternoon. I have no idea why three thirty in

the afternoon, why at night it wouldn't work or why they couldn't get some other time. But we got out of school a half hour early and they had the annual school meeting. Again this was like cleaning the school, in that particular case all the people in the surrounding area showed up. At least some member of the household basically was there. And I'm assuming at that time as like later that annual meetings that I participated in, had anything to do with they talked about the school budget, what needed to be done at the school, whether the window needed to be fixed on the third window on the east side, or whether they were going to paint somebody or somepart of the school, which didn't happen very often, or whether they was going to buy a ton of coal, or two ton of coal, or three ton of coal or what they were going to do.

Ah, as far as them buying anything in the way of maps or charts or graphs, that was done rarely. However, when I attended school there was always a rack up on the wall above the blackboard that had maps of the world. These maps of the world were maps that I later began to recognize that a the big issue was there was a map of each continent. Ah, they were not very detailed or anything but as of the time they were maps that a were used for that purpose. There was also a one chart up on the wall that as of its day was a chart of human anatomy. Well it was a very vague chart of human anatomy, ah, whether the people made it didn't know

anything more about a human being than that particular chart portrayed, but on one chart they tried to put in all the blood vessels, an' major bones, an all these were labeled and it was really rather a hodge-podge but that's what was there for school.

As far as books, there was a library, it was the whole sum of five shelves. Those five shelves were each probably about five foot long. I still remember very clearly that the bottom two were full of crud. The next one had a set of encyclopedias on it. The top two had all the worldly books that were in the school. One shelf belonged to the school district. I since have learned to appreciate that they were probably purchased for the sum of a dollar for the whole group from some other school that was closing or something. And, the last shelf was were the books came from the lending library. In our particular case they came from the Carnegie Libranay at Ottawa, Kansas. And if the teacher was particularly active why every so often why some of the books that were there checked back in and more were put up. The general use of these books, as near as I can tell was during the eight years I attended school, that every day after lunch some book of least some noted importance, either the teacher or someone else was used as a reading exercise for the first ten to fifteen minutes after school took up after noon hour. I rather imagine now as I look back the particular books were used to try to get the kids back in

school without any hassle or anything else because someone who was a capable reader, either the teacher or some student would read from this book for what ever period of time was set for this to be done. And, during the period of time that a book I suppose could be checked out that book would be covered. I assume was something of the order of the serial that was used at the early days of movies, you know, to bring them back the next day. You know well what is going to happen, oh this wonderful book in our day it happened to be Tom Sawyer, or Black Beauty, or what ever the book was that was important enough to be read. The other item of books, what ever you had, paper, pencil, books, colors, if you had them you owned them. However, during the time that I attended school I do not remember having very many new books most of the time it was a used book. There was a place that sold textbooks in the local town and down in Ottawa County Seat there were several places, but the books were basically traded among families within the community. And, if there was some particular family that had a child older than a member of your family and arrangements could be made and they did not tear the books up or what have you it was rather normal that this was the way you went about getting books. The Merrill reading series that I can still remember was the series of reading books that was used in this particular school at the time I started until I left the school. The other books that we



had did change. I can remember arithmetic books were changed. Ah, the spelling book, there was one spelling book that served the entire school. It started in the first grade and went through clear through until you were in eighth grade. So many words per week. I look back and think about how many words there were during eight years I attended this school the, the new assignment, unless you had words assigned as punishment, was the whole sum of ten words a week. You had to take a spelling test of twenty words. The ten from the week before and ten new ones. And as I mentioned earlier the teacher we had really didn't spend that much time with spelling. I found out early that the simplest way out of the punishment was to real quickly cram and be able to write the twenty words correct on Monday and then you didn't have to bother with the rest of the week. Because, once you got them all right you weren't questioned again. Ah, it was simpler to do that than it was to master words probably as they should have been mastered. Ah, as far as anything particular for us to do with words or dictionaries there wasn't anything much to do because no matter how many students there was one, big, antiquated Webster's Dictionary over in the corner of the room. And, most of us weren't big enough to lift the book so you stood over in the corner room whatever you needed to do to use it and the book was not most of the time ever removed from that stand. And, the encyclopedias were something else, ah, like

I can remember this, of course encyclopedias were one thing that could not leave the building. I always wondered why. Finally later on I finally discovered it does cost money to replace a set of encyclopedias. But, in the books were what ever they happened to be those you did not take from the building. So consequently if you had any time that you were free to, to look at books the encyclopedias for some strange reason was really the important thing. The other books that were in the school that didn't belong to you, you could check them out, you could take them home. The ...

(Please turn the tape over.)

(shuffling of paper) The other books of course could be checked out and were.

I also discovered as time went on that we probably were very fortunate, at least in the one room country school that I attended during the time I attended it, that the teachers there apparently must have been better than just satisfactory, that the group of students that I did go to school with basically went on to high school. And, from the particular high school a very large percent went on to higher education, did various things. Ah, we did discover when we hit high school that ah, we were able to take the courses that were offered. There wasn't high school without any great difficulty.

The idea of contests, academic contests, what have you and not really been anything great to us, but we did all have to prepare in this one room country school to take seventh and eighth grade examinations. These were given at the county seat, in our particular case in the county courtroom. And, the students that were in the seventh and eighth grades went in to the county seat to the county courtroom on Saturday and were given tests for normally approximately a day. Because of the number of students involved, I assume the seventh graders went in on one Saturday and a different Saturday was used for the eighth graders. (Clears throat) There were students who did not pass tests, and if you did not pass the tests, uh, you were held back in school, and would have to repeat. And of the students I attended school with there was never anyone that I know of, or recall, that did not pass the test. We did have at various times teachers that would remind us that we were subject to take these tests and how difficult they would be and if we didn't study and there were times, I'm sure, we all had our fair share of apprehension. But, never the less, they came and went. By the same token the same people from the particular school when I got on in high school invariably made up members of scholastic teams that competed from our point in tri-state competition and state competition and were capable of holding their own or doing better than holding their own, and performing very

satisfactorily and did go on and find success in academic pursuits beyond that point. The idea of whether the school or really stressed this, I don't know whether it was the teacher that stressed it, (clears throat) whether it was the individual families that stressed it, but at least from the particular community most of the students were encouraged to go to school. As a matter of fact all but one family, that I remember, it would have been an unpardonable sin for any member of the family not to attend school unless they were ill. And, they had to be very, very ill. That may be one of the things that move back to the water pail and also to the business of people attending school because of any childhood disease came through the community sooner or later everyone had it. Uh, always felt that I was discriminated because ah, again because invariably whatever it was, measles or on down the line, it would rage through the school for the winter, it was always my good fortune to get what ever this may be, for example measles, ah, the week after school was out. Umm, never the less these were things that go through and were common.

The, uh, records this particular school I later found out were not at the school but they were either sent if we went to high school or actually the, the record graduated from grade school was located in the county superintendent's office. As a matter of fact what few records there were of this school were, so I found out later, were all sent to the

county superintendent's office. I assume that probably was law. I don't know. But, uh, there was nothing left at the school. And the reason I found this out it was later on as the, (coughs) the school was eventually sold after it was closed. And finally it was torn down and a man used the school house to build a garage with is what actually eventually happened to it. Why such records as student records as we know them today were not in this school. The material had been turned in and was filed in the county court house. The, uh, reports that were made at that time to go to the county courthouse each year of course was records of who was in school, who enrolled, what courses they took, of course whether they passed, ah, what grades they had, what their attendance was. At that particular time, as I mentioned with families, perfect attendance was a big deal. That was one of the few things that awards were given for. Uh, as far as other types of awards in school at that time they were few and far between. The particular teachers that I happened to have if they were going to give some kind of award would be more likely to give award to somebody who read a certain perscribed number of books which would get them a little certificate or ah, some momentum. As far as I know there was never anything given in the elementary school setting that I attended one room country school for anything that anyone did in athletics or anything that anyone did ah, in the way of play or music or anything

else. Later in high school I found out that was different, but at least that elementary school would give some type of, if you will, quote, "gold star or, uh, uh, warm fuzzy" as our vernacular later became, or something else to the student who read the most books or at least reported that they read the most books. Or, the one that would receive the recognition would be like at noon someone who did read well and so they were given the, if you will, again quote "privilege" of reading to the school as a whole.

Ah, so far as attending this school is concerned. The times I attended it school started the Tuesday after labor day. There was the thing called teachers' meeting which didn't mean anything to me other than the fact that we didn't go to school. Uh, Thanksgiving we didn't go to school. Christmas we got time off from school. I don't remember it ever being anything definite, 'cept you're always off this much, but there was a time we didn't go to school. We then went to school, in this particular school, that was it, from Christmas until school was out you went to school. Ah, there was no such thing as observation of any day that got you out of school. If there was a day to be observed whether it be in the fall, spring, or what have you, it was observed with some kind of recognition at school. For example, Veteran's Day there was some type of program what Veteran's Day was, why Veteran's Day but it didn't mean you got of school. Valentine's Day, yes, that

was something if there were little posters and little drawings and things all over school, but you didn't get out of school. The same way there was all kinds of punkins[sic] and witches and what have you to be drawn and put on the school house windows for Halloween, but you had school. Now the community may have some special program at night, but as far as the school was concerned, no. Ah, when, when they did have these programs at night they had very fascinating lights that was brought out of someplace. I don't know where they stayed, but they were as I now know two gasoline lanterns, the Coleman type lanterns and people pumped up with gasoline in them and pumped them up and lit them. The only thing was I don, I don't rem, personally remember ever having a evening program that quote "the two" lanterns that were the school district property both of them work at the same time. There was normally some adult in the community outside trying to get the lantern to work. It was leaking gas and the gasoline and they thought it was going to burn the building down. Or, somebody had just ah, bumped the mantle, or the miller had just, ah, fluttered in the lamp and as he got his hide fried Clyde why he took the mantle with him. And, so that was just kind of a routine and so there were some old kerosene lamps that hung in brackets by the windows. As I recall every other winda[sic] had a bracket on it in which there was a kerosene lamp. Well, I've always seen these but I personally never say anybody

light 'em and put 'em back on the bracket. They would go start robbing the brackets to try to get a lamp that 'od light and then that was a contest to see if they could find the lamp that had any kerosene in it. If they did find one it was easy to light, but, uh, you had to relight the match to be sure the lamp was lit. But, that was no different than anyplace else.

As far as electricity, no there was no electricity. As a matter of fact, there was no electricity throughout that community until after World War II. Which was a good decade later than time I'm talking about school.

The, uh, school as a whole (rustling papers) was constructed for the community and at that particular time in that particular area. I can remember when I started to school that the section right east of where this particular school house was situated was divided in such small areas of ground that there were eight families living on that section. The section right south of that particular school was divided up such that there were six families living in that section. Ah, the section that the school was in was contiguous with two other sections so there were three sections that was not divided by roads. In that particular area at one time there had been seven families, but the time I was in school and by the time I could remember that seven families had dwindled down to four. By the time they got around to closing that particular school, this, this is what



happened to any number of the schools, that had dwindled down that there were only two families left living there. Ah, I am well enough acquainted with the area yet to this day that ah, the section to the east of it that had so many families on it today has one family left. The one south that had six families on it today has one family left on it. So consequently the purpose of the one room school was to have a school constructed close enough that students could walk to school and get an education at a time that was important. Ah, we did not have what would be called share croppers or anything. We did have in this school district one hill that had very poor soft coal in it. We would have families move in that would come in and was going to mine coal in the coal mines. The, uh, general run of the mill was that, ah, those families did not stay very long because the core, coal was so poor that, ah, it was impossible for 'em to dig enough coal out to sustain a family. They had, they had come into the area to do that and as far as the school was concerned any, any of the rest of it at least while I attended school there all of the families were farm families. It wasn't the case of one working in town and somebody living there or this, it just wasn't. They lived in the area, they lived on one of the pieces of ground and they were the farm family. And, uh, so consequently as far as the students being different or the same or alike, basically we were out of the same melting pot. There were

no blacks, or there were no orientals, or anything else. Basically it was white, anglo, saxon. Ah, as far as church in the particular school district there was not a church common to this school district, there was not even that commonality. Really the only common denominator was that the people that were there were farm families and they attended that school and that was there community head quarters. And, it was used as such. This was the place that, ah, when something went on in the community it went on at your schoolhouse.

The, ah, children attended school, the girls wore dresses that were made out of feed sacks. The boys wore bib overalls. If anybody had come to school dressed any other way why nobody would have known how to react. As far as the time that I went to school, at least to elementary school, I had never seen quote, "a female in slacks". I didn't know there was such a thing as slacks. I had seen women in overalls, ah, if so they were probably out with the family shucking corn. Ah, otherwise this was not the case. And, ah, as far as seeing any school boy at a school function in a suit I never saw that in my life. Ah, later in high school yes, but elementary school, no. The same thing was true with the idea or concept that you came to school with dress shoes or anything, no. And, this, this was a problem with one family we had in my early days in school because they didn't live far enough from the school to, uh, separate

themselves from the pig pen and the schoolhouse and they wore the same shoes in the pig pen they wore to school. And, uh, if you're acquainted with this why you still remember the aroma that came from pig pens, that's decidedly different from cow pens, but never the less it was there.

The, uh, general need of people being in a school as far that particular community even at that time I do not remember that school ever having a drop out. Now we had people move away and whether they discontinued school after that or not I don't know, but the students that lived in that community, and it was a small enough community, if they lived there and they were quote, "school age", or had not finished grade school then sometime during the year they did attend school. We did have two families that, uh, kept children on occasion to work. The rest of the families did not do so. And the children did attend school. The, uh, norm I assume of the community was that that was the thing to do so consequently that's what people did do.

(Rustling noise) I assume in summing up that whether one room country schools are good, bad or indifferent I do not know, but one thing I do recall and I do remember. The lessons were really quite small when you stop and think about it. But, in the particular school that I attended with the repetition that you sat through eight years of people having class, having classroom recitation, having covered, having discussed what little science we had, which

was meager, the geograph, the math, the number of spelling contests, spelling bees, the importance placed on reading and I assume I was fortunate I was in a school this was stressed. The items were repeated each class. In other words by the time I had gone through eight grades at Diamond Ridge grade school I had gone through the fifth grade assignment in arithmetic eight times. I had gone through the eighth grade assignment in arithmetic eight times. And, uh, (pause) whether that would be boring or not at least it was repeated often enough that unless you were a complete dullard and had your ears plugged, ah, ...

(Not exactly a dramatic ending, but an ending.....)