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### A Hall of Fame Teacher: Charels H. Budke 1954 - 1991

Gary L. Sechrist

*Fort Hays State University*

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A Hall of Fame Teacher:

Charles H. Budke

1954 - 1991

A Historical Research Design presented by:

Gary L. Sechrist

In Partial Fulfillment for

RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

ACES 803

Dr. Allan Miller

Fort Hays State University

Summer, 1991

## Chapter II

### Transcription of Video-taped interview

Gary: Discuss with us the schools that you have taught at in your career.

Charles: I started at Saint John's in Beloit, in north-central Kansas for two years. I then moved to Damar, a public school for four years. I finally ended up at Thomas More Prep in 1963. That is where everything happened as far as I was concerned. I've been there for twenty-seven years. Thirty-eight years was the length of time I taught. In Sophomore English I had a teacher that impressed me. That is a quick summary of my experiences.

Gary: Would your sophomore English teacher know that she had that much power over your career?

Charles: Yes, she knew well.

Gary: Is she still with us?

Charles: She is still with us in a nursing home. I don't know how old she is, but she has been there awhile.

Gary: Was it Thomas More Prep when you first came here or was it another school?

Charles: I can recall that. It was St. Joseph's Military Academy when I came and had been for some time. We consolidated in the early 1970's and have been going ever since.

Gary: Was that quite a change?

Charles: It was quite a change. We made certain we carried over the discipline for Thomas More Prep. We wanted to retain it as much as we could. The military academy was a very strict organization. It was a very fine vehicle. You didn't have to worry about discipline. It was taken care of.

Gary: What were some of the subjects you taught throughout your career?

Charles: I started out in Esbon teaching sophomore English. I went up the ladder to junior English and senior English. I have a History major and a very strong English minor. Because of that, I was able to teach many courses. Sometimes too many, because they always changed preparations on me. Next would be Damar public high school. There I taught American History and Government. Then I came to Saint Joseph's Military Academy and taught English for a while. I was hired to teach sophomore English again and really enjoyed it. We had some very good students and this in itself made it very worthwhile. They put me into history as well as a Developmental Reading course. There were students who needed a little extra work. It turned out to be a good course. I also taught Geography and Latin I and II.

Gary: Was there a favorite subject that you could choose at this point?

Charles: Well, I liked the Latin. I grew up in it and was

skilled in it. I think it helps so many students, but again it is an elective. It helps so many students with their vocabulary words, and with the discipline it takes to know conjugations and other kinds of verbs. I think it helped. I had two Latin courses. We had about 25-30 students in the two courses. They seemed to get a great deal out of them.

Gary: Would you say just the best students took Latin?

Charles: That was true. On the other hand, I loved History. I taught American History the last few years. It has been a good run.

Gary: What were some of the teaching methods that you have employed throughout your career?

Charles: To begin with, I go back 37 years.

Gary: Was your first year 1954?

Charles: Yes, that is right. Things were real different. There were a lot of lectures, probably too many. There basically was the lecture, worksheets, then the testing. Down through the years in the early 1960's, I began to change my thinking. I came up with several other things that I wanted to mention. In the History area, we got mileage out of special reports. They were not long ones. They were only about two minutes. In class, we would go down the line doing special reports. I didn't do that earlier. Yes, there had been a change in my teaching style.

Gary: Is that considered an oral report?

Charles: That is considered an oral report. I also would have panels and have various kinds of essays for testing. I

probably did not have too many essays early on, so there was a change. I think it has been a good change, because I had to be more versatile. In other words, you have to also be able to understand that I had to make this so the students could have presentations. The students needed more information. Times have changed so much. You have to keep the students interested. That is why I switched around. If you don't you lose out. There's enough versatility that it follows through.

Gary: So lecture was one of the major things that you did within your classroom?

Charles: Yes, in the beginning. I continued to lecture but I narrowed it a little. For instance we would have several tests. I always try to encourage them to write special reports. I had one every six weeks. I tried to get students to answer questions. Sometimes it was difficult to get them to communicate. I always gave them a small grade on communication on a historical work note. They had to present them every six weeks. The students seemed to like that. Some of them would try to skip them once in a while. From these presentations I was able to find out what the students knew.

Gary: Did your classroom rules change from when you first started teaching?

Charles: I guess the classroom rules were basically the same. I was rather serious about my job and always tried to communicate (to the students). I felt you had to get their

attention before you tried to insert any kind of information. I did as I was taught back in sophomore English. I continued to do like my teacher taught me. I think I always got their attention. Later on I tried to loosen up, not that they could talk when they wanted to!

Gary: Later on in the semester or the school year?

Charles: Later on in my career, the change had to do with various things like loosening up a little. I never used to do much of that.

Gary: I've wondered how teachers were expected to conduct themselves within the community? Do you have any opinions on that?

Charles: Oh, yes! That is always the case. You have to go along with the ethics of the area, usually small schools and small towns are rather straight and narrow and that's what they expected.

Gary: So they expected teachers to be held in high esteem.

Charles: Right, absolutely, absolutely!

Gary: Were you expected to be involved in extra-curricular activities such as sponsoring or coaching?

Charles: Gary, you know that!

Gary: I know, but I thought I would ask anyway.

Charles: When you start with sports for instance and you consider the number of hours that you attend various sports events, there is plenty of extra activities.

Gary: Did compensation or being paid for extra-curricular duties change? Did you notice a difference in the way you

were paid for these types of activities?

Charles: It was all within the salary schedule. Now if I were coaching I would get a little extra as you know. But for class sponsors, not really.

Gary: Coaching, at least in my experience was based on a percentage of the base salary. Is that how you remember your extra-curricular salaries?

Charles: Yes, right.

Gary: Who would evaluate the teachers and what kind of system was used?

Charles: We had a very good evaluation system. Our principal would come by and evaluate us three times a year. They came into our classrooms to take notes unannounced. I always believed in lesson plans and always had them ready, and I think that was part of the secret. After the three evaluations we would get together for a one on one session and fill out the (evaluation) forms. The students would write evaluations about the teacher and how they got along. They included both pro and con and that's what we wanted.

Gary: You said it was three times a year, and the principal was the sole evaluator?

Charles: Right, absolutely!

Gary: Have discipline problems with children changed from the beginning of your career?

Charles: Well, I guess I could say that they may have changed a little. At Saint Joseph's Military Academy we didn't have to worry about discipline, we just carried it on

(to Thomas More Prep) and it was a good system. I really loved it as a vehicle, but then when consolidation came we decided we had to try to carry it on as much as we could. I guess the problems have changed somewhat, but we have penalty periods.

Gary: I've heard of them.

Charles: You've heard of them? They worked because ninety-nine percent of the students didn't want them.

Gary: In some other districts would they be a glorified detention period?

Charles: Yes, a demerit maybe.

Gary: Were they expected to work during this time?

Charles: One hour after school and sometimes, or most of the time they did their assignments. Some of these students had problems on assignments. Maybe they would go work in the grotto or wherever.

Gary: The teacher could give penalty periods if students broke a classroom rule?

Charles: Yes, most of them would do that. I never did. I had other methods.

Gary: What were those methods?

Charles: To finish up the penalty periods, they were announced every morning.

Gary: So everybody in the school knew?

Charles: They knew!

Gary: I've never heard of that before.

Charles: I think that makes it very interesting. I always

believed in taking care of my own classroom. I always believed in giving them something to write. Maybe I would have them two minutes for oral reports without notes. Sometimes they would go about a minute and it worked. Otherwise if there was a real problem we had a study hall. We had seven hours and I could take one (a student) to a study hall. I'd give an assignment for a day and see if that worked.

Gary: If you had some students that were a little behind in their work did Thomas More Prep have a system to help those kids get over the rough spots?

Charles: Yes, some of those were of course the penalty periods where they would work. The Developmental Reading helped a great deal for some of those kids. I taught that course the last ten years and I haven't coached in that time either. I had more time to get those students after class and go through with them some of the things that they need. I mean to tell you that worked.

Gary: I bet!

Charles: You can see some improvement, especially in a course like Latin. Suddenly they understand what it's all about. Reading and writing is basically what we did. We had various degrees of reading material that we gave to them that stepped them up. We also had all kinds of worksheets, so I think it really did help. I know that everybody cannot do that, to take the time to sit down with them two to three times a week and work with them, but it's a good method.

Gary: It sounds as if you were ahead of your time. You were doing the concept of Outcomes-Based-Education. (All students will learn)

Charles: Hopefully, that is the case!

Gary: Did the percentage of students that furthered their education after graduation decrease, increase, or stay the same from when you started?

Charles: In our case we probably have 70 to 75% of our seniors earning scholarships to post-secondary institutions. Many of them go into the professional areas. The school is trying to compile a list of lawyers, doctors, and writers, it's quite interesting, quite edifying. We have a number of former students that are doing a good job.

Gary: It sounds like the school was doing the right thing.

Charles: One of our students was Jerry Seib who is now a White House correspondent with the Wall Street Journal.

Gary: He was in a hostage situation several years ago wasn't he?

Charles: He was a hostage in the Middle East. Now he's a great writer. So maybe somewhere along the line we helped him a little.

Gary: I know that Thomas More Prep has had a dress code. Do they still enforce it?

Charles: It's still there and it's got to the point where it works pretty good. Oh there have been some complaints here and there. I hear of some schools thinking about it. The boys, of course, no jeans. They had to wear regular trousers

and shirts with collars, hair cut right, otherwise they would get a downslip. The girls wore white blouses and the famous blue skirts. On Friday (the boys) would have to wear the blazer in season, and of course a tie. They were used to it.

Gary: How did that improve education?

Charles: Well again, being as we were, a college preparatory, not allowing jeans and other certain types of clothing to maybe change their attitude. I think this kind of helps their attitude in most cases. I think it helps them to develop a little bit more class, feeling they are able to carry on in a little better manner. Sometimes if you don't have a code, things really deteriorate, and before you know it you're having shorts and that takes away from studying.

Gary: I'm sure parents loved having this code.

Charles: Oh, definitely.

Gary: Are there any traditions that you say are peculiar to a parochial school as opposed to a public school? We just talked about one in a dress code.

Charles: That would be one which we enjoy because we can use it in many versatile ways. Otherwise, I guess you could say we are rather careful as to the studies they take and the classes they take. It is maybe traditional to promote some of these students into courses, into electives that they may question at first but get along fine in most cases. Now that we actually have more courses and a seventh hour we are able to be more versatile and students would challenge themselves a little more. Maybe go into another course, such as a

higher level math course they didn't think they were capable of. The students temperament carried on from Saint Joseph's Military Academy. We had officers, and everybody could get different ranks. They would drill and learn the way to act and react. I think basically it is very important, as you probably know being a teacher. You have to try to make the students understand a little more of the classics. That's the way we were brought up.

Gary: Thomas More Prep High School was strictly a boys school until approximately 10 years ago. Did things change when the girls were consolidated from Marian High School to Thomas More Prep?

Charles: Yes, there was a great change. First of all, it was a necessity. Financially it was a necessity because the finances just were not there. There was some reluctance on the part of both sides and both faculties. But through this period, talking about these things, getting together, suddenly we were in the middle of it. It has worked out fine. They thought the consolidation was necessary and it has carried on. Now we are all together and that has helped the situation.

Gary: Before the consolidation the girls would walk to Thomas More Prep for certain classes and the boys would walk to Marian High School for certain classes. Is that correct?

Charles: Right! They would come over for certain classes, not a great number but some wanted it, and that made sense. Maybe they would come over for a higher level math course

that wasn't available at Marian High School. Some of the boys would go over there. Eventually they thought the schools were going to have to come together, and have bigger classes.

Gary: Was the administration different in both schools before the consolidation?

Charles: Yes, until the consolidation and then there was one principal.

Gary: Were there some teachers that were not able to keep their jobs because of consolidation?

Charles: Not a great number.

Gary: But there were?

Charles: There were a few. There were a few that moved on. I think several went part time and that helped.

Gary: Did it go down to the tenure of the teacher or the amount of years they had been teaching?

Charles: In most cases, yes.

Gary: But it wasn't a big problem in your mind.

Charles: Not that I could recall.

Gary: Was the hiring process and if there was a firing process, did it come down to one person or was there a panel?

Charles: In the beginning there was no salary schedule. You would go in to negotiate. The salaries were almost identical depending upon the number of (college) hours you had. Then came the salary schedule. I had a hand in that. I thought it was very necessary. It did help a great deal. When that

came about it helped the situation as far as I was concerned. I don't recall too many situations like that. Teachers did move on at times. I don't recall over one or two that were required to move on.

Gary: Would that be based on the evaluation we talked about earlier?

Charles: Right, absolutely!

Gary: Not a lot of difference from a public school?

Charles: Not really.

Gary: Has there ever been any controversies or rough spots, either personally or maybe as a faculty at any of the schools you have been at?

Charles: I can honestly say that I have enjoyed my entire teaching career. I don't recall anything that was too controversial. It isn't controversial now, but it might have been at one time. When we changed our name from Saint Joseph's Military Academy to Thomas More Prep it was a highly emotional issue.

Gary: Was it emotional for the faculty, public and patrons, or both?

Charles: Both. At that time we were not certain of the situation. Father Blaine was the man behind it. He eventually said what we would have for a name. But he had some educating at the beginning of who (Thomas More) was. Some had visions of Saint Joseph's High School. There were some controversies going on. We had some interesting discussions and we finally resolved it, I guess.

Gary: Father Blaine made the final decision?

Charles: He was in charge of the Capuchins. We had 18 to 20 of them in our school. We didn't have that many at the end because they are doing parish work now.

Gary: So there has been fewer Capuchins teaching at Thomas More Prep.

Charles: Oh, yes.

Gary: Would you tell us your salary when you began teaching in 1954?

Charles: You would not believe it!

Gary: It would be interesting.

Charles: I started back in 1954 at about \$2,800 dollars a year. It wouldn't pay my electric bill now.

Gary: You said your salary was \$2,800 to begin with. How was that salary determined.

Charles: Well again, the board got together and decided according to each teacher. I was a first year teacher and some received other remuneration. Being a first year teacher I was low man on the totem pole. But the rest could negotiate.

Gary: Were you ever conscience of female teachers being paid less because they were not the so-called head of the household?

Charles: That was the case, but I don't think that's the case now. But I think there were interesting situations that would come up in which the women teachers would suffer a little bit on salaries. But once the salary schedule was

invoked then it was normal.

Gary: Then the salary index just completely nullified that situation?

Charles: That was probably in the middle 60's when we had the salary schedule, and then it was much better. Before it was negotiations.

Gary: That's my next question. When you say negotiations, are you talking about an individual teacher negotiating their salary or was it a negotiations team?

Charles: It would be a team and the principal would be involved. They would decide on a certain amount that they thought they capable of paying. The principal would call the teachers in individually and talk to them about the salary they would give you. I suppose there were attempts at negotiating, but not many.

Gary: If you decided you didn't like the salary was it time to move on?

Charles: Well, yes. In 1963 I was halfway through a master's degree and I wanted to go to Fort Hays State University and finish it up. I was tired of Saturday afternoon classes and Saturday morning classes. So I decided to come and look over here (Hays). I looked at various schools and found out they needed a sophomore English teacher at Saint Joseph's Military Academy. I took a cut in pay but it was worth it. We brought our family over and I finished my master's degree. It worked out fine.

Gary: You moved from Damar?

Charles: Right.

Gary: This will probably be a very tough question. Do you perceive a difference in teaching at a public school, and a parochial school?

Charles: When I taught at Esbon (a public school) for several years we got along pretty good. Their fundamentals were not the greatest in Junior High and I was happy to build them up. I tried, but that takes some effort.

Gary: It takes more than one person.

Charles: I was the Librarian too by then and it was unbelievable what we didn't have. Not that every small school has to have a complete library. I was instrumental in getting them to buy some books. I hope we were able to improve things a little. Later on at Damar, they had good discipline and good administrators. They did a good job. At Saint Joseph's Military Academy is was rather a strict type of discipline. I don't want you to get the impression it was extremely strict. But it was the idea of allowing people to discuss things and talk about things one at a time, otherwise you know what it's like. I think maybe private schools are more often a little more serious about their situation. When you stop and think of it, we pay tuition and get students to come out. We pay taxes like everybody else and we get no kind of merit, and that's a little different. We have to have the same kind of school the state law requires from all district schools. That's just a point. I'm not belaboring the point because we want a different school. We are holding

up really well.

Gary: One of the things educators say about improving education, is that parental involvement would help. Do you think since there was tuition, that parents were more involved in their children's education?

Charles: I think they have to be. The tuition continues to grow a little, but it's still far below the amount of money each student gets. We're educating people at a lesser salary as far as instructors are concerned. We talk about tax credits, hopefully someday that will happen. We have a good system and it continues to improve [enrollment].

Gary: What is your definition of a good teacher?

Charles: Well, first you have to have organization, and teachers do. I think the quality of lesson plans could be improved. Saturday afternoons are a good time to do lesson plans. Sometimes they are very brief and some are very elaborate. When you are teaching four or five classes like I did, I had to go down the list and be more elaborate as to what I was going to teach. That has to be very important. You're ready! By the same token, if you're ready then teachers will do a better job of challenging the students. I like to challenge them. I never use to do that, but I changed during the sixties. They (the students) kind of liked that (most of the time). Then my pet-peeve since 1972 or 1973 has been critical thinking. I think that if you can critically think these students through, and give them something to evaluate, you're improving their thinking

skills. We say Columbus discovered America. They can get that even though that's not exactly what happened. They should critically evaluate. I call them "what-if's". What if Columbus sailed to the west side of the United States? How would that change things? What if Hitler had defeated the English? He came very close. How would that have changed the world? You could write an write about that.

Gary: The higher level thinking skills are definitely important!

Charles: Oh, my! I have done a lot of reading on that (critical thinking). It really does help.

Gary: Good teaching has changed from 1954 to 1991?

Charles: Oh, yes! It's more challenging, teachers can be more versatile. There are a lot of things in that area. It use to be, if you go back beyond 1954, the old rote business. Memorize this and that for no reason. Sometimes some would say for these reasons, but not always. What if Hitler had defeated the English? You could write for hours.

Gary: Do you think that coaching, because of the time factor, can help or hinder a teacher?

Charles: When I was teaching sophomore English I taught Junior Varsity basketball, and it was a great help. I'd see the students all during the class day and in the evenings or afternoons. You knew their idiosyncracies. You knew what they were thinking most of the time and I think it did help. Plus the fact there was more to just basic learning in the classroom, there was more to that in the gym also. They had

to be taught what a zone defense was and why you get out of a condition sometime. There are so many things in that respect. I think it can be overdone, but everybody should have a chance at it.

Gary: So healthy mind-healthy body!

Charles: You bet, no question.

Gary: We are going to end with a pretty tough question. What do you think needs to happen to improve the state of education?

Charles: I'll probably step on some toes. Can I?

Gary: Sure, that's what this is for.

Charles: I just feel that not enough teachers are concerned school-wide, not concerned about their students. I feel that because of the tenure plan, it's not doing the job.

Sometimes they get strong support from other areas like the National Education Association. I feel that stronger evaluations need to come into play. I'm not talking merit pay. I'm talking stronger kinds of evaluation for tenured teachers who slow down and don't do the job they need to do to educate those children. I feel lesson plans are very necessary, and not everyone uses them. Classes are to be used in full most of the time, not just the first ten minutes. This goes back to my semi-strictness. If they rely on something like tenure too much it could cause problems. I feel that could be one. We need to do something about the finances and that's a very tough situation. When we're talking about students, they say let's put more money into

the system. That could solve the problem. Teachers need more money to make a living, don't get me wrong, but to put more money into some situations is not the answer. I think we should try to live within our means.

Gary: You have some very good opinions.

Charles: I feel very strongly that way. I'm a person who wants to do the right thing. I've always been that way. That's thanks to my Dad and Mom. Maybe I get a little too serious sometimes.

Gary: Charles, I want to thank you for this interview. This was tremendous. In case the audience doesn't know, this is my father-in-law. He is someone I have always looked up to as a teacher. Thank You.

Charles: The feeling is mutual.