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1985

### Interview with three generations of one-room school house students

Doris Reile

*Fort Hays State University*

Eva Herbel

Elsie Wilson

Linda Wilson

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# Interview

of

Mrs Eva Herbel

Mrs Elsie Wilson

Miss Linda Wilson

Historical Account of the Shaffer  
(Dist 13) Seventh-Day Adventist  
Church School, Bison, Kansas

by

Mrs. Doris Beile  
former teacher of the  
school - for History of  
American Education  
- Allan Miller -



*Doris Reile*



*Linda Wilson*



DISTRICT 13 SDA SCHOOL  
BISON, KANSAS

1978 GRADES 1-7 1979  
MRS. DORIS REILE, PRINCIPAL  
MRS. REILE, TEACHER



1983 - Exterior paint bee of School  
and remaining outdoor restroom.

Cover picture showing paint bee of  
the school by volunteer help.



↑  
Elsie  
Herbel  
Wilson

HISTORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION  
Interview of Students of a One-Room Country School  
by Doris Reile

REILE: This is a personal interview with three generations of students from the former Shaffer Seventh-day Adventist church school, now called District 13 Seventh-day Adventist church school. It is located approximately six miles southeast of Bison, Kansas. My name is Doris Reile, and I have recently finished teaching six years at this school. The school is still in operation. Today we are interviewing Eva Herbel, her daughter, Elsie Wilson, and her granddaughter, Linda Wilson.

Eva, when did you go to school?

EVA: 1913.

REILE: Elsie?

ELSIE: I started in 1953.

REILE: Linda?

LINDA: I started in 1977 to '85.

REILE: Our current school year starts the third week in August and finishes the third week in May. This is the term that Linda has been attending. Elsie, how long did your school last?

ELSIE: When I first started, we started after Labor Day and ran until, I am not for sure when in May, but we would go until May, and then in some of my later years -- sixth, seventh and eighth -- we started in the latter part of August.

REILE: Eva, how about you?

EVA: We started school and ended at April. We started school at nine o'clock and ended at four o'clock.

REILE: Okay. Now for the interesting thing. What did you do at recess? Eva?

EVA: We played black man, chaney, and three blind mice, drop the handkerchief,

and hide-and-go-seek.

REILE: Okay. Now for some modern-day from Elsie.

ELSIE: Well, we played dare base, kick-the-can, Captain May-I, and baseball.

LINDA: We played dare base, king base, kick-the-ball, baseball. We played basketball. We played touch football sometimes. That was about all.

REILE: Okay. The lunch hour was an hour for all three of these students. They ate for approximately a half hour and played for approximately a half hour. Now we are going to discuss what they brought for lunch, and what they carried it in. Eva?

EVA: Syrup bucket. A Karo syrup bucket. We ate sandwiches, fruit and cookies.

REILE: Okay. Elsie?

ELSIE: Mine was very similar, only it was the traditional black metal lunch bucket or pail or whatever you call it. We had also sandwiches and maybe fruit and maybe celery and carrot sticks and something to drink.

LINDA: Had a Tupperware lunch pail, and had like a sandwich and something to drink and cookies.

REILE: Okay. After discussing this with each one of them, we decided that if they weren't having school in modern times, they were contacted by telephone; but Eva was telling us that they had school no matter what the weather was like. If there was a vacation, the teacher would tell them ahead of time; other than that, they were expected at school.

We are going to discuss grades and attendance. Eva, did you receive any special prizes or certificates or any rewards for your grades from your teacher or your parents?

EVA: No, I don't know of any. Oh, the sticker we got -- a reward of a star or a flower sticker.

REILE: Okay. Let's see about Elsie.

ELSIE: As far as for grades or attendance, we didn't get any. I remember Mom and Dad telling us we would get a quarter for each A we got on our report card; but other than that, there wasn't anything.

LINDA: We never got anything either way for grades or attendance.

REILE: Okay. Now, if something went on that wasn't supposed to, what punishments were given? Eva?

EVA: From the teacher we had to stay in or stand in the corner, and from the parents we had a scolding.

REILE: Okay, Elsie. Did you receive any punishments or your group?

ELSIE: Fortunately, I didn't. I don't remember the early years what was punishment other than maybe standing in the corner or going out into the hall for a while, or maybe, I think, some extra sentence work -- you know, write so many sentences doing this and that. When I was in my later years -- seventh and eighth grades -- I remember the teacher giving a spanking to some of the boys, but that's all.

LINDA: Sometimes have to go in the hall or get a spanking or write sentences or maybe have to do the work in the hall.

REILE: One of the main subjects in the early school was penmanship, and a lot of emphasis was placed upon it. Eva will tell you a little bit about that now.

EVA: The first thing we had penmanship, and that was very important at that time and even got certificates for being the best handwriting.

REILE: Eva, what did you wear to school?

EVA: We had dresses, and they were starched and ironed and clean. Every day we had to change our dress, put a slip on underneath and even long-johns.

REILE: Okay. Elsie, what did you wear to school, and then we will let Linda

describe hers after you.

ELSIE: We always wore dresses the first part of my school, you know. When I got on to the fifth and sixth grades, in the wintertime we lots of times would put jeans on under our dresses to keep warm. Then further on in my seventh and eighth grades we lots of times could wear jeans or slacks to school.

LINDA: We just wore jeans and T-shirts, and that was about all.

REILE: On describing the types of texts, Eva happens to have one of her readers here. It is called the True Education Reader Series. It was published by Pacific Press Publishing Association, which is the main publishing association of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and this has a copyright date of 1907. It is a nice little book with a lot of dictionary skills, a lot of sentences more than stories -- sentences with questions. Each lesson has a basic theme. It looks quite interesting here. I don't know how well it would do in today's society, but it looks interesting.

Elsie can't quite remember what hers was, but Linda happened last year to receive the 1984 edition of the New Life Series by the Ginn Company, which is a brand new series off the press. So we have from the old to the new here from 1907 to 1984.

We are going to ask Eva about homework.

EVA: We got up in the morning early. We had to milk cows and get the horse and buggy ready to go to school. When it was snowy, we had a sled; and if it was real cold we had a wagon with two horses and a cover over our heads. After school we done the chores, feeding chickens, milk cows, sometimes field work or baling hay after school.

REILE: Okay, Eva. Did you ever have to bring your books home to study?

EVA: Yes. After supper we studied until eleven o'clock, and then we went to bed.

REILE: Okay. Let's see if Elsie had any homework, and if she had to study.

ELSIE: I don't recall that we had very much in my lower grades of homework to take home. Some of the later years -- the seventh and eighth grades especially -- we had homework. It would take probably about an hour or an hour and a half in the evening to do it, but there wasn't a whole lot.

REILE: Okay. Now, Linda, I was your teacher most of the time. Was I hard on you with homework?

LINDA: No. The only time we really had to study was if there was a test, and you didn't have to study. It just depended on what kind of grades you wanted how long you would study after you got home.

REILE: Just an added note. She is an excellent student.

Eva, when you were in school, what was the average age of a child when they started school, and what were the older kids -- how old were they?

EVA: We started when we were seven years old. There were boys and girls that were thirteen and fourteen years old.

REILE: Okay. The reason for the older age was that they did have ninth and tenth grades at some time in the school. Okay, Elsie. What was the average age when you started school?

ELSIE: The average age was about six, depending upon when your birthday fell, like it does now, I think, somewhat. I was six when I started.

LINDA: I was seven when I started, and the grades one through eight and usually thirteen or fourteen.

REILE: Okay. Now, we're going to discuss some of the aspects of the school itself. One of the questions that we are dealing with is, was the school open to all of the kids in the community? Since this was a Seventh-day Adventist operated school, the majority of the children there were Seventh-day Adventists. Eva,

were there ever any children in the school that were not Adventists?

EVA: I don't know of any.

REILE: Elsie and Linda, how about you?

ELSIE: I remember particularly one year we had a couple of children that weren't Seventh-day Adventists, but I think most of the time they all were.

LINDA: There was one or two in our school that weren't Seventh-day Adventists.

REILE: Okay. So, basically the school was built for Seventh-day Adventist children of the area. Since we are dealing with a private church school, our process of finance will be a little bit different than the public school system. First, we are going to ask Eva how the school was financed in her time.

EVA: The parents paid the teacher for each child they sent to school. That was about \$10.00 a month, and the teacher got about \$75.00 a month.

REILE: Okay. Let's see how this changed by the time Elsie went to school.

ELSIE: Inflation went up but the teacher's salary didn't. I can still remember that she got about \$75.00 a month is all I can remember, and the parents altogether put that much in.

LINDA: The parents and the Seventh-day Adventist church in the community helped pay for them, and the tuition was about \$85.00 a month.

REILE: Okay. Times really have changed. Eva, what were some of the teacher's extra-curricular activities?

EVA: Mr. Peters was the teacher. He had overalls on when he taught school. He went down in the creek there beside the schoolhouse and gathered sunflower sticks to build fire in the morning. The parents hauled coal in the school bin and that was our fuel for all winter. If the coal bin was empty, why, each parent had to change off to haul coal; and the teacher had to build his own fire.

REILE: Okay. Elsie, can you think of any extra jobs the teacher had when you were there?

ELSIE: I remember that we got water over at some of the neighbors. There wasn't a well there. We'd have our each individual duties, but then maybe at the end of the week the teacher would stay after school and scrub the wooden floor so it would be ready for the next week.

REILE: Dealing with who governs the school and who hires and fires the teacher, since it was operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church, the Kansas Conference, headquartered in Topeka, Kansas, had a committee who dealt with the hiring of teachers. Upon recommendation from the local board and parents, the teacher could be fired, but it had to be dealt with through the conference educational system first.

We are going to discuss the physical problems of the school building. This has some rather unique information with it, so we are going to let Eva discuss this first.

EVA: We had electricity. We had our neighbor that was close -- Henry Glantz. He was the one that had a generator for electricity, so that is where we got our lights. No bathroom in the schoolhouse -- just outhouses. For the boys one, and for the girls; and there were three rooms in one outhouse. We has about forty-seven students -- two school rooms, two teachers.

REILE: Okay. Eva, can you tell us, did you have a well? Where did you get your water?

EVA: We had to dip the water from the closest neighbor. Each one had to change off. The students had to change off getting the water with the bucket. Two students had to carry the bucket.

REILE: Okay, and we have already discussed that it was heated with coal at that

time. Now we are going to move on to Elsie and see what happened to the building after that.

ELSIE: The first few years, as I can remember, we had an oil burning stove, and then it was put into a natural gas burning stove. We always had electricity. We had outhouses. In fact, they were the same ones Mom had, I think, except I think one was rebuilt, but they were the outhouses. And water we had to haul. The parents would see that it was brought in either by the closest neighbor or they brought it from their homes, and then we had a little crock with a spicket on it that was dispensed to get our drinking water out of and also to -- like to wash our hands from.

REILE: All right. During the years that Linda was there, when I was teacher, they drove a new well. It was the second well that was drilled on that location. We modernized the building so much that it even had an air conditioner in the window, so at the present time it is very modern. They built in two bathrooms, put in fluorescent lighting and propane heater, so very modern. And new carpeting just a couple of years ago.

The one in charge of keeping up the building was usually the teacher, with the help of the students. When major things needed to be done, like painting and major fixing, the parents usually came in or called for a work-  
bee among the church members. This was usually very successfully done.

We are a little bit vague on the very, very beginning of the school. We are thinking somewhere around 1906. Eva is going to tell us a little bit about what she remembers about the school that was there previous to the one that we have been talking about. She was in it her first grade only.

EVA: We had only one teacher, and we had one of those big heating stoves, and then we had tin around that big stove so it wouldn't get too close to the

students, because it got awful hot then.

We didn't have any Bible books or anything. Our teacher took us up in front and we formed a circle, and he taught us all the Bible stories when we were in the first grade.

REILE: In discussing where the teacher lived while they were teaching at the school, we came up with the consensus that they lived close in the vicinity of the school -- maybe in the neighboring homes. Eva just now remembered that one of the teachers lived at Glantz's, which was the farm right beside the school in a two-room washhouse. Now Elsie is going to tell us where teachers lived during the time when she went to school.

ELSIE: Some of them also lived in the vicinity, but there was one I remember that had a small trailer house that he just parked right in the school yard. Then, after that some of the parents would board the teachers at their home; and we ourselves, I remember, had a teacher that stayed at our place for a while.

REILE: And by the time I came along, I lived about three miles away from the school.

We have been discussing the teaching methods that were used. When Eva was in school basically it was the recitation method, where the teacher assigned the work, they went back to their desk and studied, maybe even had homework, and then came back up, sat on a little bench in the front and waited for recitation time. Now when Elsie went to school, it was a combination of recitation and lecture. By the time Linda got there, modern-day teaching was centered more around the lecture style.

In discussing what system of evaluation was used, we decided that Linda was the only one that has been given specialized tests, such as the Iowa

tests of basic skills. Elsie nor Eva can remember of anything like that.

The question is asked, did the community, which would be the churches here, raise money for equipment? During Eva's and Elsie's time they decided that if anything was needed the parents had to pay for it, and so there wasn't much modern equipment added to the building at that time. Now, when Linda came along, there happened to be an organization which had been started called the Home and School Association, which is comparable to the public school P.T.A. This is a group of concerned people from the school and from the churches who are willing to cooperate to better the school, and through different projects like selling, having workathons, bikathons, and things like that, new items were added to the school and the school was remodeled, carpeting was added, a computer system was purchased. Linda, what are some more things that we got through some of our projects? They painted the outside of the school and various things like that.

On building a library for the school, Eva tells us that through the years each year the church would buy so many books. This was through a plan called the Missionary Volunteer, and these were all books that were published by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, centered around mission work, Bible stories, and good biographies and autobiographies. This went on through the years -- this same project -- until about ten years ago, when this was stopped and the school was allowed a \$200.00 a year amount to spend on buying library books. So, since this time the library has expanded greatly.

In dealing with the physical changes that have happened to the school during the years of use, not much has happened up until the time when Linda started school, other than maybe a change in the type of furnace or something like that. Through the years that Linda attended, the ceiling was

lowered, the library was changed into two bathrooms, storm windows were placed on all the windows -- and it has many, many windows. New shingles, new paint -- let's see, what else? -- new carpeting. The one room was just carpeted for the first time just two years ago. The other had been carpeted back quite a while ago. But this has all just happened within the last ten years.

Some of the remains from the years that we have decided are still at the school are a large Webster's dictionary, many, many different books, including some of the original reading books and some of the other text books. There's a bell that has been taken down that is in the basement. There's an oil stove, a map rack with maps exactly like the ones in the little Plymouth school, a piano, a teacher's desk, also exactly like the one in the Plymouth school, slate blackboards, and one of the rooms still has the original light in, which is a bowl-shaped light hanging on a chain. I have asked Elsie to explain something. The room had something unique in it -- a unique room divider. I'll have her explain that.

ELSIE: The school room is basically two rooms, but our blackboards divided the two rooms. They were in a divider, and they could be raised and lowered; and if we had a program or something where we needed the two rooms, then the blackboards were raised so that it would actually make one large room.

REILE: Okay. Eva, as a little child I can remember going over there to have programs -- church programs. The way they lifted these, there was a bucket of sand for a weight up in the attic, and this was used as a balance to raise these blackboards.

Besides the typical school subjects, Eva is going to describe some of the other things that were taught when she was a student.

EVA: Every Friday from noon on until three o'clock we had sewing class. We made dresser scarves and different articles, and learned how to tat, how to crochet; and the boys, they had the basement to work on different furniture. They made sofas covered with leather and dressers and chairs. We were all graded with our grades.

REILE: During the time that Eva went to school, the students were basically German Seventh-day Adventist farm kids -- most of them related.

Eva, how big an area did the school cover when you were there?

EVA: They came from twenty miles with horse and buggy. That was the furthest out of the school area.

REILE: Okay. At the time when Elsie went, they were mostly right from the community and they came in by car. It changed a little bit during the years that Linda attended there. I will let her describe that.

LINDA: When different churches spread out, then the children started coming from farther around, and some came from Larned and Nekoma area and Great Bend and LaCrosse.

REILE: Okay. This opened up the distance up to at least twenty-five miles that they were coming in by car -- some in groups -- car pooling.

I am going to read a short passage out of a history of the Shaffer church, 1885 to 1950, which was written by Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Huenergardt:

"On July 13, 1894, Brothers Mereyvele and Doehring paid our church a visit in the interest of Christian education. They were in all, well received; and plans were initiated accordingly. At ten o'clock on a bright Monday morning the following fall, 48 eager pupils presented themselves for admittance to our first church school in the Shaffer district; grown-ups, teenagers, and children. All were in the mood to learn 'reading, writing, and arithmetic' (with a few additional courses thrown in for good

measure), but in the mother tongue (German). Brother Doering was the first teacher. Following is a list of the enrollees:

"Adam Schneider, Phillip Mohr, Henry Mohr, J. J. Mohr, John Simon, Sr., John Simon, Jr., Lizzie Simon, Isaac Mohr, John Mohr, Sarah Mohr, John Eitel, Henry Eitel, Adam Huenergardt, Elizabeth Huenergardt, Eva Huenergardt, John Boehm, Lizzie Boehm, Jacob Schmidt, Henry Schmidt, Sarah Ott, Roy Ott, Linda Kaufman, Gotleb Willhelm, Gustov Engel, Carl Dobrenskie, Lydia Dobrenskie, Anna Dobrenskie, Roy Dobrenskie, Mary Mohr, Hannah Mohr, Sarah Simon, John Westermeyer, Lizzie Westermeyer, Emma Keglör, Ben Mohr, Mary Schmidt, Adam Schmidt, Fred Mohr, Godlib Schneider, Alex Simon, Jacob Simon, Charlie Hartman, Herman Doehring, Mrs. Schreader, Henry Meyer from Tampa, Emmile Hetzie from Herington, Mary Schreiber from LaCrosse, and a Mr. Oblander from Oklahoma.

"During the second school year, Mrs. Schreader helped out in the teaching program by taking charge of the younger children."

In the same history of the Shaffer church it is mentioned all of the workers in the Seventh-day Adventist church that have come out of the Shaffer church, and the majority of these have attended the school at some time. These include twelve foreign missionaries, ten institutional workers, eight conference workers, six doctors, fourteen trained nurses, twenty church school teachers, besides a number of lay and Sabbath School workers. This report was made for the 1960 seventy-fifth anniversary, and so since this time these numbers would have increased quite considerably.

Eva has something to add here at the end that is very interesting.

EVA: When I went to school, the teacher taught us manners. As they came in in the morning to the teacher to meet her, they said "Good morning." And other polite things that add. If you step in front of a person, to say "Pardon me," and so on.