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Interview with Zola Houghton

Thomas A. Cannon
Fort Hays State University

Zola Houghton

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Mrs. Zola Houghton: An Oral History

Education 700

Thomas A. Cannon

July 18, 1984

Dr. Allan Miller

Professor

INTRODUCTION:

The following taped conversation is being done in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a course at Fort Hays State University entitled "History of American Education." My name is Tom Cannon, and today I have the privilege of interviewing Mrs. Zola Houghton of Luray, Kansas. Mrs. Houghton has much knowledge and experience in early Kansas education that should be of great value to the Fort Hays "Stone School-house Project." This interview is being conducted on July 4, 1984.

Cannon: Zola, before we discuss your teaching experience, I'd like to know a little bit about your early life.

Houghton: I was born and raised at Lucas, Kansas, went through school there, graduated from high school there in 1919.

Cannon: I see. And you spent your entire grade and high school at Lucas?

Houghton: Yes, yes.

Cannon: And I understand as a part of your schooling you qualified to have a teaching certificate.

Houghton: Yes, They were giving us normal training work in those days in high school, and my junior and senior years I took the course that was offered...and I had a certificate. But I could have taught two terms of school before I was eighteen, but I was only sixteen when I graduated from high school. But they wouldn't allow us to teach until we were eighteen.

Cannon: Where and at what age did you begin college?

Houghton: I began that fall, 1919, at the age of sixteen at the University of Kansas.

Cannon: What were your major interests in college and where did you develop this interest?

Houghton: Well, my major in college was mathematics. I later changed more or less to commercial work. But I think I got my start by working in the bank with my father from the time I was fourteen, during vacation periods only.

Cannon: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents? I believe they both had some experience in the field of education, both in teaching or working on the schoolboards or such.

Houghton: Yes. They met at the Kansas Christian College at Lincoln, Kansas. My father was doing part-time teaching to pay for his tuition. He always said my mother was his best pupil...and she was much younger and she didn't get to stay to graduate. He graduated. Later she taught school. She took the normal course in the summertime and taught school, and he went to work in the bank at Lucas in 1899...I believe was the year. They married that fall, after he'd gotten that job.

Cannon: Where and when did you get your first teaching job then?

Houghton: My first teaching job was in the Lucas Grade School when I finished out a term for a teacher that got married and didn't want to teach any longer. I taught the third and fourth grades that year...I'm sorry, the fourth and fifth grades. The next year I stayed on for a full year and taught the second and third grades and had forty-six children in my room that year.

Cannon: And you were not out of college at Kansas University?

Houghton: No. No, I had just had a year and a half of college at that time.

Cannon: I see. Then you returned to college?

Houghton: Yes. I returned to college then the next year and went that full year. Then in the next fall my mother had been quite ill with the summer flu and I couldn't leave home. So, I stayed at home for awhile and later, along about October...the middle of October or a little later, I got an opportunity to teach a small country school at the edge of Lawrence, Kansas. (I) had the first six grades. So, I taught there six weeks while the teacher had an operation.

Cannon: You did have a little bit of country school experience?

Houghton: Yes. Yes.

Cannon: Didn't you also then do some teaching in other western Kansas towns after you graduated from college?

Houghton: After I graduated from college I did alot of teaching. I have a total of fifteen years of teaching altogether.

Cannon: Can you run down the years that you taught in the different schools and where they were?

Houghton: I taught at Paradise, Kansas, in the high school from 1925 to 1932. I taught at Bunker Hill in the high school from '32 to '34. Then I married

and didn't teach for a time. (I) came to Sylvan Grove in the fall of '37 and taught there for three years, '37 to '40. After that, I was home and working at odd jobs. I worked at fee paying time at the University of Kansas helping write up their fees and things of that sort. Then I had an opportunity to finish out a term of school for another teacher down at Rantoul, Kansas, and I finished that term. I would have gone back there, but, at that time, they didn't want married women teaching and they wouldn't hire me back. Before the summer was over, I got an opportunity to teach at Appanoose which was a little high school out on the prairie... no town there at all...southwest of Lawrence about thirty miles. And I taught there for two years during the wartime, when war was beginning.

Cannon: You have some interesting stories about your gas rationing back then, don't you?

Houghton: Oh, yes, yes. I wanted to stay at home and was very happy to stay at home. It was quite a drive at times, and it was during the gas and tire rationing. But because I picked up students, they allowed me the necessary gas and tires. I had no trouble with tires 'til one awful cold day when the roads were so rutted...and finally it fixed a bad tire for me. And then I wondered what I was going to do. I didn't know whether they'd let me have another tire or not, and I certainly didn't want to make that sixty mile round trip every day without an extra tire...but they did let me have it.

Cannon: I'd like to go back to your teaching years in Russell County. How was the pay back then for a teacher in the 1920's and '30's?

Houghton: I can't remember what I got to begin with. After teaching there, the last year that I taught there, the seventh year, I got \$160 a month. Then that was when the Depression hit, and the next year I did the same work at Bunker Hill for \$90 a month. That's the way wages dropped. And that was only for the nine months of school. That wasn't during the summer time, either.

Cannon: Right. Probably in view of the depression times it was about equal money though, wasn't it?

Houghton: Oh, yes, yes. Everything else dropped in price so that you do just about as much with your money as you had done before.

Cannon: And how often were you paid? Was it monthly?

Houghton: Every month, yes. I believe in the fall often times we were paid at the end of the first two weeks to help us get started, but after that it was just once a month that we were paid.

Cannon: What subjects did you teach at these different schools?

Houghton: I wish I could remember all of them. In the course of all my high school teaching, I taught almost everything in school except foreign languages. I was the home economics teacher at Paradise. I was the one lady teacher that they hired for that, and I had the mathematics to begin with. I don't remember what else. Then later they hired a superintendent who wanted the math, and so they asked me to take the English which I did. I went back to summer school that one summer before I started teaching the English and got a few more credits and a few more interests in it. So I taught that then rest of the time I was at Paradise. I don't remember whether we ever got into course work there at all or not. I think not.

Cannon: You also got into some other things like the natural sciences, didn't you?

Houghton: Well, yes.

Cannon: A little bit?

Houghton: A little bit. I can't remember just what I had. I know I worked with the music teacher, too, at times when she needed somebody to play the piano. I helped out there alot of times.

Cannon: You also taught some physics?

Houghton: Later, in another school down at Rantoul I think is where I had to teach the physics class. I had shied away from history in my college work. I got the feeling that I didn't like it or something. I think it stemmed from the fact that I took the fifth and sixth grade in one year and the sixth grade people had already started in history before I got into it. Then, when I was a freshman...I wish I could see that text book that we had in ancient history. It seemed to me that it was the hardest thing any student ever had to study. Now whether it was, or whether it was just me...When mother had time, which was seldom, to sit down and read it with me and study it with me, I could get some sense out of it. Then medieval history wasn't much better the next year. So when I went to college I kind of shied away from history as much as I could. The last year I was in college I took a course called "Institutions and Ideals of the Bible." I had a teacher that I liked very much and I was working hard on it and making straight A's in it. And when I got about half way through, all of a sudden it dawned on me that that was nothing but history. And here I think I had had a mental block all through those years that I couldn't get history. Now I'm interested in it, very much.

Cannon: Was this typical for most teachers back then to be diversified in high school and teach anything they needed?

Houghton: Oh, yes. You had to if there weren't very many teachers in the school. There were only three of us besides the music teacher who taught both grades and high school music. There were only three teachers in Paradise School most of the time when I was there.

Cannon: That ties into my next question. Can you describe the different types of teachers that might be found in a small town high school in north-central Kansas? Were they mostly women or what?

Houghton: Well, in our high school it was two men and myself all of the years that I taught there. We had some very nice men to work with. I enjoyed them.

Cannon: Where did you live when you first began teaching in Paradise?

Houghton: In Paradise I think I stayed with my uncle and aunt that first year. I had three different places that I lived in the course of the seven years. One year I had a room...another teacher and I had a room in the upstairs of the house where the superintendent was living and we boarded with them. Then one year we had two rooms in a home where...the big family of boys...but they needed the money so badly that they crowded up to let us have the room and we had our own cooking privileges there. And then, a couple of years, I stayed with a boy and a girl who had been former students of mine there in Paradise and had married.

Cannon: How often did you meet with the school board and what type of relationship did the administrators have with the teachers?

Houghton: That's too far back to remember! I don't think we met with them very much, no. Things went along very well so I didn't have to, I guess.

Cannon: No problem, no need?

Houghton: No.

Cannon: Let's move to the school itself for a few minutes. What were the school buildings at Paradise like?

Houghton: Well, the first two or three years that I was there we were in an old stone building. Had two rooms on the second floor that we used for high school. In fact, I think before we were through there we used the two rooms down on the main floor too, and they moved in a little country school for their grade school. Then, after that, they built a nice new high school building where we had plenty of room. Had a lovely home economics room that I enjoyed very much. Had a nice gymnasium there but as time went on...this was after I left...they built another room for a gymnasium.

Cannon: Is the first building that you taught in still standing there?

Houghton: No, no. It was taken down. I don't know when it was taken down. I don't know when it was taken down. There's a third building built there now that I think must be for grade school though I haven't talked with anybody to know for sure about that. But I saw some playground equipment out back of it so I felt like that was probably what that building is used for.

Cannon: Was the first building in Paradise adequate as far as facilities for teaching?

Houghton: We didn't have much! We got along!

Cannon: Can you describe the types of textbooks that you used?

Houghton: No, not especially. I still have some textbooks from when I went to grade school, but I don't...well, I have some books from later in high school. We had an English book that I liked very much and I kept one I think. They were just average books, I guess, as well as I can tell you.

Cannon: What was the size of the school's library and how was it?

Houghton: I can't remember whether we had much of any library there at that time at all. The library that I remember best was down at Rantoul, Kansas. Had a nice little library down there, and I read alot of books that I wanted to read too while I was down there.

Cannon: What was the length of the school year and the length of the average school day?

Houghton: The school year was nine months. The day, as nearly as I remember, was from 9:00 to 4:00, possibly 9:00 to 3:30. I don't remember for sure about that.

Cannon: How did you start the school day off with your class? Was there anything special that you did first thing in the morning?

Houghton: No, I don't remember that there was. When I was teaching in grade school I think we had a story or something of that sort to begin with. No, we just had our schedule of classes and I don't remember that we did anything special.

Cannon: Could you just describe for me the typical school day?

Houghton: Busy! When you weren't in class you were keeping study hall and helping students if they needed help. No, I just don't think of anything special. That's too long ago!

Cannon: OK. Did you rotate the students, of course, in different class periods?

Houghton: Oh, yes. Well, yes, and we'd offer some courses one year for two different years of high school and then, the next year we'd offer the other course that should have been perhaps for the sophomores or something of that sort...because our high school was small. As I remember it, we had thirty-five or forty students; and with just three teachers you couldn't offer too many things at a time. But, by combining the freshman and sophomore class for one course one year and then the other course the next year, we could cover the curriculum pretty well.

Cannon: This was freshman through senior?

Houghton: Yes, that's right.

Cannon: What types of teaching methods did you use that you found particularly effective?

Houghton: Well, I know it was a good thing to make lesson plans ahead of time. That helped. It helped in more than one way. You knew what you were going to do, and, by planning ahead you knew whether you were going to cover the curriculum that was outlined by the state...whether you were going to get through with the year's work that you were supposed to do. I had learned to make lesson plans when I was taking that normal training course in high school. I think I got a pretty good grade on my work, because I'd made good lesson plans in those days. Then, too, if you had your lesson plans written out then, if you were sick and somebody else had to substitute or anything of that sort they had something to go by. They knew what they were supposed to try to do. I'm not sure that I was the best teacher in the world as far as that's concerned...although I've had some students tell me that they were glad they had me for a teacher...that I was a good teacher. One girl who took commercial work from me at Sylvan Grove later went to a business college and she came back and she said, "Oh, I'm glad that you were our bookkeeping teacher. These kids came down there and they didn't know anything." And of course I had some banking experience back of that that I could tell them how the banking process worked and the exchange of checks from one town to another and things of that sort. So she had had some of that that she was ahead of alot of students, I'm sure, on that account.

Cannon: Did you try to relate the practicalities of life to students and just have informal discussions?

Houghton: Oh, I suppose we did, yes, at times. I, I'm just...that was a long time ago. Afterall, I'm eighty-one now you know!

Cannon: Right. Well, we're just trying to jog your memory a little bit here.

Houghton: That was over sixty years ago, you know.

Cannon: Did you assign alot of homework that you remember?

Houghton: Some. I don't know that I assigned a whole lot of homework, but really if you're going to get anything out of schoolwork you need to do some work on your own. I think that's one of the mistakes in the schools now is that the teacher's over them all the time to tell them what to do or to help them all the time, all the time. And they don't learn to work individually or take responsibility it seems to me like. Now I'm not really in the school system, but as I watch that's the way I feel about it. I think that two grades in the same room were not a bad thing because we learned from the upper grade as we went along. And, as I say, we didn't have a teacher supervising us all the time. We were expected to do our work.

Cannon: What types of discipline were used in your school?

Houghton: My thought always was that if you made your school work

interesting enough you wouldn't have discipline problems. Now, I don't think that holds good today 'cause children are too used to watching television and being entertained. But, I didn't have a great deal of trouble at all with discipline. Once, twice maybe, I had to send somebody to the superintendent to talk things over.

Cannon: Did the men and the women teachers handle discipline differently?

Houghton: Well, I don't remember that we did. I don't know.

Cannon: So the major type of punishment that you might have handed out was just somebody down to the principal?

Houghton: If it had to be. I felt like I should take care of it myself if I could.

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

Houghton: They were supposed to be models, very perfectionists, and straight upright people. Now they liked for you to attend church or maybe teach a Sunday school class although I didn't do much of that in those days. I've done plenty of it in other times, but not in those days. We didn't have smoking in the schools. We didn't have this five-ten minute rest period or so forth where you'd go off and leave the youngster alone like they do nowadays. Ours was straight work, right straight through.

Cannon: What were some of the teacher's extracurricular activities in the towns?

Houghton: Well, of course there was always the sports that they had to take on. We had the music teacher, so I don't remember that there was much else besides that. I don't remember that we had any Boy Scouts or anything like that in that town. Of course the town was small anyhow.

Cannon: Did you help any with athletics?

Houghton: No, I don't think I ever did. Now I played basketball when I was in high school. I loved basketball, but I don't remember helping. The other activities that I did help some with were...one year our faculty put on a play and I took part in that, and then I helped the music teacher some with her operettas.

Cannon: What special events happened at the schools? And by this I mean did you have Christmas programs, music contests or spelling bees? Anything of this nature?

Houghton: We had Christmas programs always. We had a last day of school dinner for the whole community. Off hand I can't think of any other things particularly.

Cannon: No music contests?

Houghton: I don't remember whether we entered in music contests back that far or not. I really don't remember, because I wasn't actually doing with the music. But I know that the music teacher put on some beautiful operettas there. Did a lovely job. She was an excellent musician, excellent at making costumes for the kids and all sorts of things.

Cannon: How large were your average classes?

Houghton: Oh, I'd say maybe ten...eight to ten, something of that sort.

Cannon: But the first year you taught in Lucas you said, you had nearly forty?

Houghton: Oh, yes. Well, I had about thirty-five in that fifth and sixth grade, and then I had forty-six in the second and third grade. That room was full. We could hardly...we just barely had room to stand at the sides of our seats and take some exercises now and then to keep us from going berserk!

Cannon: What would the total enrollment, say, for Paradise have been for their ninth grade through seniors?

Houghton: Around thirty-five to forty, I think, most of the years that I was there.

Cannon: How far did the furthest students have to travel, and what modes of travel did the rural students use to get to school?

Houghton: Well, some of them walked. I remember one girl and she had several miles to walk. And one icy day...it was uphill and downhill...and I asked her when she got there how many times she'd fallen. And she very seriously said, "I think fourteen." But I can't remember whether we...we didn't have any public bus or anything like that for them. I know that. Whether they rode horseback, some of them, to school or were brought in by their parents.

Cannon: Of those thirty-five to forty students, were they split about fifty-fifty as far as rural and town students?

Houghton: Most of them were rural. The town's so small there wasn't room for too many people there in town.

Cannon: What was the population of Paradise at that time?

Houghton: About the same as it is now, I think, but I don't know what that is. I don't know whether it would be as many as two hundred people living there or not.

Cannon: Were the majority of your students of any particular religion or nationality?

Houghton: No, no. There was nothing like that.

Cannon: We think of some of the areas like Wilson being Czech.

Houghton: Yes, yes, that's true. But no, there was nothing like that at Paradise at all.

Cannon: How about at Bunker Hill?

Houghton: No, I don't remember that we had anything particularly there either, either the religious or nationality.

Cannon: What was the dress and the overall appearance of the students?

Houghton: Well, the girls didn't wear jeans in those days, I'll tell you! They wore dresses. They all looked neat. They weren't overly dressed or well dressed especially, but they were neat and clean.

Cannon: Did the schools have any special rules that you can recall, maybe, as far as conduct or attendance?

Houghton: I don't remember anything special. We just expected them to do right. If you expect that of people you usually get it.

Cannon: What type of graduation ceremonies were held?

Houghton: We had a class night program that the students participated in on that week of graduation. Then we had an out-of-town speaker for graduation night. We also had baccalaureate at church. There were three particular services for the closing of school.

Cannon: Do you know of any of your students that went on to become what might be called outstanding people or did quite well?

Houghton: Some of them have done quite well, yes. Too many of them are gone now I'm sorry to say. And I've been in touch with a number of them through the years. I hate to miss their alumni meeting at Russell this summer, but it will take place while I'm gone. They meet every two years, and I was there two years ago. Saw some that I hadn't seen since they finished high school. It was good to see them anyhow. I've known about them through the years.

Cannon: Were you part of a larger school system such as we have today with Russell School District?

Houghton: No, no, no. We had our own school districts in those days. Lucas was district number 3. I've forgotten what Paradise was, but we had our own school districts and our own school boards. And they hired and fired the teachers and told them they couldn't come back if you want to put it that way. My father was on the school board there at Lucas for thirty-five years or more, I guess.

Cannon: What type of grading system did you use back then?

Houghton: Mostly it was A,B, C's for alot of it. We did have some figure grades at one time, I think, but before I got through teaching we went to the A,B,C grading plan.

Cannon: Was it usually based on a straight 90 percent, 80 percent?

Houghton: I don't know how others did. I kind of did that for myself. From 94 to 100 was an A, from 85 to 94 a B, from 75 to 85 was a C, below 75 was a D or getting down very much lower was an F. That's kinda the way I remember it as the way I divided it. Now whether the other teachers used exactly the same form or not I don't know. But that was the form.

Cannon: Do you recall ever having to fail a student or hold him back a year or be partly responsible for holding a student back?

Houghton: I refused to sign this graduation certificate for one student. He had fooled around and had not done his work, and I gave him a certain amount that he was to do to finish up...and gave him the opportunity and he didn't do it...so he never got his graduation certificate. I hated it, but, afterall there was no reason why he couldn't have done it.

Cannon: Were most of the students what you would consider good students though?

Houghton: Yes, most of them were pretty good students, and I had a few very excellent students. One boy in particular that I think of that took his high school work in three years and made excellent grades all the way through. Another girl in one of the other schools who was just excellent in everything she did...music, sports and classes.

Cannon: Was that a fairly comson thing to accelerate students?

Houghton: We did it in those days. That's what happened to me when I took the fifth and sixth grade in the same year. I don't know that you can't do it anymore, I guess at all or very little of it if you do.

Cannon: Of course now days they have what they consider the gifted program.

Houghton: Yes, that's true. And if they have a really gifted student why they can get to do some extra things anyhow. They may not get to go on from their grade particularly, but they get extra things. It's a wonderful advantage, I think.

Cannon: Did you ever take any field trips or were you able to get out to different places?

Houghton: The main thing that we did was the seniors went on a sneak trip and I had to sponsor that most of the time. I took a group to Kansas City one time. Two years I took a group to Kansas City, but the first group was

the larger group. We stopped down at Fort Riley and looked around there at Camp Funston. That was very interesting. There were some of them that had just never been away from Paradise particularly at all. Had never been that far away from home. I've forgotten now what the picture show was we took on...a good picture show at Kansas City, too, while we were there. We had stopped in Lawrence and I had, what was it, two girls in the class, I guess, and the rest were boys. My brother was staying in a fraternity, was a fraternity member, and so he took the boys to his fraternity house overnight there and I took the girls with me. Then I took a group from Sylvan down that way one time, too, when my my folks were living there.

Cannon: Was there any organization similar to the PTA or were parent and teachers involved much together?

Houghton: Not much in those days, no...at least not much where I was. I do think PTA is great and I attended PTA all the time when I lived in Portland (Oregon) when my boys were in school.

Cannon: Do you think parents back then were concerned with their children's education in high school?

Houghton: Well, there're always some that are and some that aren't, I think, and I feel sorry for those whose parents aren't particularly interested in what they're doing or learning. It takes some backing at home if you're going to get real results, I think, out of the children.

Cannon: Was there alot of teacher turnover back then?

Houghton: Not too much, no. Somewhat, but no. We stayed. There were several of us. I still keep in touch with one of the teachers at Paradise. He lives down at McPherson, Kansas, now.

Cannon: Do you have any special memories of your time down at Bunker Hill that might be of interest?

Houghton: I was doing commercial work there, teaching the commercial work more than the mathematics and enjoyed that very much. Some of those poor boys worked so hard on that typing. Oh my, they worked hard but they were getting it.

Cannon: Did you have some special training in typing?

Houghton: I had taken the typing and short hand both at the business college at Lawrence in the afternoons one year while I was going at K.U. I wanted short haad and typing and they didn't have it at K.U. at that time, so I thought. "Well, this is the way I'm going to do it."...And I borrowed money from my grandfather to pay for my tuition at the school and went in the afternoons. Of course I didn't study quite as hard at night 'cause I was too tired that way. But I didn't get to finish with their class. Their time of

closing the school was different from U.U. It lasted a little longer. I had been told that if I'd work ahead on my shorthand they'd give me the test and give me the grade, but, when it came time to finish up, they didn't. But afterwards I found out it was not an accredited school anyhow so it didn't really make that much difference. Then in...later on... I went to...My husband was working down in Winfield, and I went down there at Southwestern College and got 6 hours of credits in shorthand and then 6 in typing that summer, three of each just on examination and then I had my credits. The year before that I had gone to school at Lawrence and taken accounting and business law which set me up in good shape then for teaching. I hadn't enough credits for teaching commercial work.

Cannon: How about your years in Sylvan Grove? Does anything stand out there?

Houghton: I was doing teaching of commercial work there. Yes, I was teaching commercial work there. But that was before I had gotten some of my credits from the colleges for teaching. I was teaching it on the basis of what I had done at the business college where I didn't get to finish up...and also on my banking experience and my mathematic experience, commercial arithmetic, and commercial geography, bookkeeping, shorthand, typing.

Cannon: Zola, I think we'll take a short break here and go ahead and resume in a few minutes.

Cannon: Zola, I believe we'll go ahead and resume now. I'd like to get back a little bit to the students. What would the typical curriculum have been in the 1920s when somebody enrolled as a freshman? For those four years what would the average courses have been?

Houghton: Well, the freshmen always took algebra and English...depending upon what we could offer, general science or history, something of that sort. The sophomores took the geometry and some more English. In other words we had three classes, three years of English, and we had to have two of mathematics. Then, if we could teach physics and some history along with it...if we had something so we could teach some general science fine. But required were definitely two units in math and three in English, and I've forgotten whether it was a definite requirement in history or not. I don't remember. I know I took three years of it in high school.

Cannon: And did you have a biology course as such or was that a part of your general sciences?

Houghton: Part of the general science usually.

Cannon: Did most of the students go on to college, or what do you think the career goals were for most of the students after they got out of high school in Paradise?

Houghton: Not very many of them, I think, went on to college. I'm trying to think now. The girls got married soon after high school, and some of the boys did farming.

Cannon: That might be what I'd expect in a rural community.

Houghton: Yes, that's what it was. In fact some of them are still farming.

Cannon: Was this somewhat of a problem when boys got to be juniors and seniors? They thought maybe the education wasn't going to be any use to them?

Houghton: I don't remember that it was. We expected to get our high school education and that was it.

Cannon: Nowadays schools have a special person or a staff that performs individual duties. You might have a school psychologist or a therapist, all types of things, a librarian. Back in those days a teacher was expected to be everything to everybody. Did you feel that you helped handle that fairly well?

Houghton: Everything, yes.

Cannon: Did you run into a lot of children that might have had problems at home or had some type of problems?

Houghton: I wonder sometimes if I recognized or realized as much as I should have some of the problems at home, especially when I was teaching the grade school because I was rather young then. I'd always had such a nice home life at home that I was not as aware, perhaps, of children with problems. I know we had one family where the mother had died and the father tried to keep the family together. And they were very poorly clad and not always as clean as they might have been...hair not combed like it should be, but I always was the same to them, I think, as I was to anybody else. I know one student who had said yesterday, or said last year, that how one teacher had spoken of the children sort of disparagingly, but that I was always good to them. They said I was their favorite teacher. That's the way she said it. "Well, you're my favorite teacher."

Cannon: That has to make you feel good.

Houghton: Oh, yes. It does.

Cannon: It sounds like school back then might have led full circle to what we have now. It seems we're having a back to basics movement across this country now.

Houghton: I think it's a good idea myself. Gets a little more of the basics.

Cannon: Apparently that's what the emphasis was, was on reading and math.

Houghton: Yes, oh yes. Yes it was.

Cannon: Did they offer any languages, foreign languages?

Houghton: Not in Paradise. We didn't have enough teachers to offer anything like that. The Lucas school offered Latin at one time. I don't remember whether they offered any other language or not. Possibly German because we had some German people in the vicinity. But Latin was the only thing that I really remember that we had.

Cannon: As far as your supplies that you used for schooling, do you remember anything about those? Not only the supplies, but what they might call teacher aids.

Houghton: Not much. We had a blackboard. We used that.

Cannon: Now days we have things like slide projectors, and movies.

Houghton: Oh, yes. But we didn't have anything like that in those days at all.

Cannon: Did you hand out alot of materials or was most of it put up on the board to be copied?

Houghton: Alot of it was put on the board because we didn't even have duplicators, Xerox equipment and things of that sort, in those days.

Cannon: Did you use alot of recitation, class participation and discussion?

Houghton: Tried to, yes. Of course there were times...especially after I'd had my trip to Europe in 1930...I felt like I could tell them alot of things along with the literature we were reading and thing of that sort... that I hoped to make it more interesting to them. I'm a firm believer in travel as a means of education.

Cannon: Now days that's tax deductible if you're a teacher.

Houghton: Yes, I guess so.

Cannon: Was schooling what we think of today as being free schooling? Did everybody afford schooling?

Houghton: We bought our own textbooks in those days. I think now days the school has the textbooks. Alot of places they do rent them out, something of that sort. But we bought our own textbooks, and that's the reason I have some of my textbooks from when I was a child.

Cannon: You usually kept them then or possibly passed them down?

Houghton: Yes, one of the two. If you didn't want them then you could sell them to the next pupil. One of the things that we did alot in those days

that we don't do now at all with the children...I don't see much of it... was memorizing poetry, things of that sort:
How do you like to go up in the swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it's a wonderful thing,
The most wonderful thing ever a child could do.
I've forgotten how it goes. Anyhow, we had just a lot of poems, good poems, that we learned. My cousin and I got together here a few years ago and got to reciting poetry to each other, filling out where we couldn't remember. We had a big time.

Cannon: You mentioned a moment ago about some of the literature. What were the novels of the time?

Houghton: Well, one of the books that I always thought was good for children was "Five Little Peppers and How They Grew." My sister loved the "Ann of Green Gables" and books along that series. But some of the murder stuff they have on TV today these days is enough to kill anybody off!

Cannon: Did they use the classics quite a bit?

Houghton: Yes, we did that too, and there were certain things that we were required to use. We had a course of study put out by the state that listed certain things that we were supposed to do.

Cannon: What was the cost like for pupils? Was it fairly reasonable, where everybody could afford to send all of their children to school?

Houghton: Oh, yes. I think so. Most people could anyhow. I don't remember. Our textbooks were not terribly expensive in those days. They were good enough books, too. They hadn't hit the inflation period.

Cannon: When you reached the 1930s, early 1930s, and the depression, did this affect some of the older high school boys that they had to drop out of high school?

Houghton: No, because most of them were farm boys, and in the wintertime they were not tied up so much with farm work so they were able to go to school and get their education as I remember.

Cannon: Speaking of winter time, can you recall some of the worst winters in Kansas back then?

Houghton: Well, some winters were bad and some were good. I know the winter that I was teaching out at Appanoose and was picking up students we had some very bad weather. The roads got awfully rough and terrible rutted. That's what ruined one tire for me...days when we were having to get tires when we could...when they allowed us. One year at Paradise the weather was awfully cold for a week, down around 17 below every day for about a week. We didn't have school because we couldn't heat the building, couldn't get them warm enough. Sometimes it would snow enough that it was hard to get around, too.

Cannon: It seems like we haven't advanced too much. Even in this day and age they still miss several days a year in the winter time.

Houghton: Yes, this weather in Kansas changes things quite often for people one way or another.

Cannon: We were visiting a little bit about the early years of the Depression. You might not have taught quite as many years, or might have had a different career, had not The Depression and the Banking Holiday come along. You were interested in banking, were you not?

Houghton: Yes, my father and I had always hoped that we would run the bank together some day. That was our plans, but with the bank holiday...they let the banks stay open for a year or so after that but didn't release the deposits...and so since there was a second bank in Lucas the people had to go there to do their business. The state bank was not under regulations as the national bank. Finally they closed the bank down although we had met every requirement that the Reconstruction Finance Corporation had required, but still they didn't let us open.

Cannon: The school, even today, serves an important role in the community. In a small town like Paradise I would think that it may have been, along with the churches, quite often the hub or the center of activity.

Houghton: Yes, it was. And when they combined Lucas and Luray it changed our situation in Luray very decidedly, when they took our high school students away from us from up there. It sorta killed the town, I thought like. Of course they have the grade school up there, but it's not the same as having high school students that are getting ready to take their place in the business world. They are all gone away to Lucas now, and they'll go farther.

Cannon: You see this throughout Russell County, in Gorham and Dorrance. It's quite a problem. How did the school serve, say, in Paradise? Did you have a lot of town meeting or social functions at the school other than educationally related?

Houghton: I don't remember that we did.

Cannon: It wasn't really used as a community center that much?

Houghton: Well, when they had their community dinners, something of that sort. I don't remember whether we used it. I know one year when I was teaching the home ec work, the Banker's Convention, Russell County Banker's Convention, was meeting there; and my mother helped me, and we cooked the chickens for the dinner. We served the dinner that evening to all the Russell County bankers. That was done at the schoolhouse, but that was still when we were still the old schoolhouse; and it wasn't very easy to do all that on those little old coal oil stoves that we had.

Cannon: We haven't talked too much about your role as a home economics teacher. Can you expand on that a little bit and what you did in the classroom there?

Houghton: Well, one of the things that I had some of the girls do...I would give them a list or we'd work over a list of the groceries that we needed for what we were going to make; and I'd have them go to the store to buy...get the idea of buying as well as preparing the food. Of course the home economics work there...I had never had any college work at all, but I sewed from the time I was tall enough to meet the treadle on the sewing machine. The summer that I was eight years old we took a trip to Colorado and my mother and I took a week to make...do the sewing before we went, and you didn't buy little boys suits already made in those days. She did all the cutting out and the basting, and I did all the sewing machine work; and we made an extra dress for me that we hadn't counted on doing. We got it done. And I used to get those slatches that the tailor had and piece quilts, comfort tops from those. Did that. Mother says that after we come back from Colorado that year then that I helped make my sister's baby clothes, and she was born that fall. And cooking. I think I started most of my cooking when I was a freshman in high school when I was taking cooking in school. I know I got up on my birthday and surprised them by having biscuits for breakfast. They didn't know I was getting up and doing that. And, of course, when mama was sick so much my junior and senior years I had to do all the cooking then. So it was just sort of from things that I had done through life that I taught the cooking and the sewing.

Cannon: You were quite capable of teaching home economics without having any college training then?

Houghton: Well, I did the best I could under the circumstances. Let's put it that way. I'm sure other people could do better with the training they have. We got some things done.

Cannon: Nowadays, along with home economics, they offer a lot of things... family planning, sex education and this type of thing. In some schools, of course, not all. Back in those days you might have been confident to a girl sometime but they really didn't have probably much.

Houghton: When I was in Y.U. I did take a couple of courses in home ec, not the cooking or the sewing, but in planning, scheduling your day's work and things of that sort, and home architecture. I took a course in home architecture.

Cannon: Another thing that is quite evident today is the new regulations where all the handicapped students are guaranteed a free and appropriate education, no matter what their situation might be. Can you recall...did you have students that might have been learning disability or slightly mentally retarded or have physical handicaps in your classes?

Houghton: No, I think I did not have through the years any problem with

that sort of thing at all. Now there was one family who had a younger boy, but he didn't go to school to me, that was rather slow...something not quite right...but he didn't go to school. No, it was an older brother that was handicapped. But I don't remember having any students that had any particular problems that way.

Cannon: Can you remember what the general public attitude was of those types of disabled people?

Houghton: If we didn't have any well we just didn't think anything about it I think as much as anything. We didn't give any thought to it, because we didn't find any need for it.

Cannon: Did you have the luxury of a school nurse or anything of this nature?

Houghton: Oh, no. Nothing of that sort at all.

Cannon: You had to know your first aid as well if something happened?

Houghton: Bandage up a little cut or something of that sort.

Cannon: Was illness much of a problem? Did you have alot of students that missed a great amount of school?

Houghton: Not an awful lot and fortunately I kept well. I missed very few days of school all the fifteen years that I taught. Very few. I always felt like...I wondered if I would ever have gotten my first teaching job if my father hadn't gone along to help, because in those days I was so thin that I didn't look like I could stand anything. And yet my health was always good as far as being able to do things. Still have quite a bit of energy.

Cannon: Did they feed you well at the high schools or did they expect you to bring your own lunch?

Houghton: I went home for lunch most of the time wherever I was staying, and the children that came in from the country brought their own lunches. When I was teaching in Lucas we instituted a hot lunch there and one teacher or two teachers took a turn each day. And I know I used to fix dried beef gravy and potatoes. I've forgotten what else. Some little thing so that they had a hot lunch, but we didn't do anything like that at Paradise at all.

Cannon: I'm about to the end of my questions, Zola. I think we've done a pretty thorough job of covering the years at the different schools. Are there any other special memories that you have of those years or little anecdotes or stories that you'd like to conclude with?

Houghton: No, I don't know as I do. I remember one fall, sometime in the fall, when the high school boys got to playing with some fireworks...got burned. I felt awful bad about it. It wasn't at school or anything like that but I was quite concerned. And I felt a great deal of concern for

the boys when they played football for fear some of them would be hurt. I had quite a motherly feeling about the kids in those days.

Cannon: Well, today being July 4th I think that's an appropriate story for us to close our interview; and I'm sure from visiting with you that there were a number of students that benefitted greatly from your wisdom and advice and care that you provided for them over the years. And I'd like to thank you very much for your time spent with me today.

Houghton: You're welcome! I know one student in particular that finally managed to take a trip to Europe because she had been so interested in the things that I had told about. She happened to be my cousin. She was going to school to me at the time. She always told me afterwards...I didn't know it at the time...she said "Oh, you made me want to go to Europe so bad." And so she finally did go, too.

Cannon: Do you have any regrets as you look back that you chose teaching as a career?

Houghton: Oh, no. I regret that I couldn't have understood some of the children a little better and maybe could have done better things for them than I did. I think a person will always have those regrets. You can look back and see some things that you might have done differently; but no, I enjoyed it and if I hadn't, I wouldn't have told the story hour for the children at Luray these last five years. There again, whatever expense I've had I've done that on my own and made alot of things out of boxes and things of that sort. But my reward comes when I meet the children on the street. "Hello, Zola. Hello, Zola." And one little boy had moved away that fall. Then, when it came Halloween time, he was back in town and he came to my door for trick or treats and he said, "Aren't you the lady that told us stories last year?" Well, all that is my pay for things of that sort. If they remember me with a happy thought, why that's fine, OK.

Cannon: And I guess one other thing we might add here is you're never too old to learn.

Houghton: Oh, no. Definitely not.

Cannon: Friday, you're heading to Minneapolis and then on to Israel for your second trip to the Holy Lands.

Houghton: Yes. In the last year and a half I've studied computer.

Cannon: Right, we want to include that.

Houghton: I've also taken two different courses in painting since I've been here, so I've been continuing my education both at extended college work and with good reading material for the Federation of Women's Clubs. They choose books from most notable works of authors, and I read four in each section

that I choose. I choose which type I want to read, and then I make a book report to the State Library in Topeka. Eventually I get a certificate for the work that I've done. I've read sixteen of those books... Now I'm on my nineteenth right now and that, with my college work too, gives me more credits for the reading course. I'm enjoying it. I just don't have enough time to do all the things I'd like to do.

Cannon: Well, I've enjoyed the afternoon with you. Thank you very much, Zola.

Houghton: You're welcome!