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Interview with Beulah Brinkworth

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Fort Hays State University

Beulah Brinkworth

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CHAPTER II
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

VIC: Today is June 23, 1990, my oral history of a one-room schoolhouse teacher is with Mrs. Beulah Brinkworth. This interview is taking place at her home. Today we are going back in time to the late 1920's and early 1930's when her teaching career began in a one-room schoolhouse in Jewell County. What formal education did you have before you began your teaching?

BEULAH: I had eight years in the elementary school and four years in the high school. My last year of high school I took normal training, that is, I was given a certificate after taking a test on the subjects that would be taught in the elementary school.

VIC: What age did each child generally begin school?

BEULAH: They usually began at six years of age, but they could come at five. There was no regulation on what age they were to come, but most of them started at six years old. There was no kindergarten.

VIC: There was no kindergarten at all?

BEULAH: No kindergarten even in most town schools.

VIC: Did many children move in and out of the schools during the year?

BEULAH: No, see that is a farming area. Usually they were just permanent, if they moved it was usually the first of March because farmers almost always moved the

first of March, but that would be the only time you would have a change in students.

VIC: What was the greatest distance traveled by some students?

BEULAH: Most schools in this area were about four miles apart, so the school was usually located in the middle of that area, in about a four mile square area. Now that was not always true but that was a pretty good average in Jewell County.

VIC: So generally about two miles would be as far as any one student would travel?

BEULAH: Yes, right.

VIC: What was the mode of transportation used?

BEULAH: Well when I was in the first grade, we walked, I lived two miles away from the school. We walked unless of course it was stormy and then the only thing we had was a buggy. In later years people would usually walk if the weather was good otherwise the parents would take them in an automobile when I began teaching.

VIC: How many students went to school?

BEULAH: That varied, because I only had thirteen children and five grades in the beginning. In the school where I went to school, we had as many as thirty children in all grades. When I went to the seventh and eight grades, it was a large school, it varied according to the community. Within every two miles you had quite a few people (farmers) living and if it was a rich farm area a lot of

people lived there.

VIC: What grade levels were you teaching?

BEULAH: I taught one through eight but the grades I had my first year were pretty easy because I had first grade, second grade, fourth, seventh and eighth.

VIC: What type of occupations did your students generally take up after they left school?

BEULAH: Well, that varied, I kept track of most of my students and it varied, now the boys would usually be farming at the time because it was a farming area and there were not too many professions. The girls, I know two of them went into nursing, three of the girls I had that first year were teachers, and the rest were wives. They usually got married.

VIC: Did you have any of them go on to college?

BEULAH: Yes, one from that grade went to college, a girl, and she went to New Orleans.

VIC: Did the students of this school come from any particular cultural or heritage background?

BEULAH: Not around here they were pretty mixed, this is an area of a lot of German people mixed, but we had no colored people around Jewell County. The only colored people we had were from Mankato. He worked for the motel, he, his wife and two children worked for the motel. That was the only colored people we had. Blacks!

VIC: How long did the students generally go to school?

BEULAH: Eight years, but not always. I had one boy that

came in the second year, Gilbert, and he was just waiting to be sixteen because you were suppose to attend until you were sixteen according to law. He was just waiting to turn sixteen in the spring and that's what he did.

VIC: Did you have any outstanding students that you can remember from the North Star School?

BEULAH: Yes, this one girl that I had as an eighth grader, she was so good at school. She really was an outstanding student as far as being good and intelligent. She has gone on to do nursing. Of course I had Gilbert too. He was on the other end of the spectrum. (laugh)

VIC: Right.

BEULAH: But most of them were just sort of average. What I mean is they had not had many books compared with today and of course that did not have the exposure.

VIC: How was the dress and overall appearance? Was there variance in that too?

BEULAH: No, it was pretty common for them to have their mothers make their clothes. Even the boys shirts out in this area, it was a farming area and most of them had their overalls. I had one little boy who came to school, whose mother was so particular, she was so petite, and she sent that little boy to school with white shirts. That was so silly out in the one-room schoolhouse. She made his clothes, she even made his slacks out of cotton material, but that was so silly because by the time he went home he did not look nothing like when he came.

(Laugh)

VIC: Did they wear shoes in the summertime?

BEULAH: Well, yes they would come to school dressed. The mothers would make their clothes and the little boys would come with new jeans in September, hot as it could be but they always had to be dressed for the first day of school. The did not wear shorts or anything like that, they had to be dressed up in their jeans or their little overalls usually and shirts for the boys and the little dresses for the girls. They always made fancy clothes for them to start school and they would get so hot. You know how the hot days are sometimes in September. I never lived in a deprived area, this area was not a deprived area. Sometimes I've had children, not in those schools, but in town schools, where they did have a hard time and came dirty and did not have good clothing. The farm areas, I think just about everywhere had enough clothing. They even used chicken feed sacks. That was one of the common things that they used for the little girls' dresses. Of course, to feed chickens, in the beginning they used the grain from the farm, but even back in those years when they would get some baby chickens, they would get feed sacks. Those feed sacks were pretty, it was a print material, cotton material, and they would make the little dresses out of them.

VIC: What was the cost of education to the students and their families?

BEULAH: They paid their taxes, you understand that these farm areas paid according to what kind of community they were. Out where I taught was not lowlands, it was sort of an upland area, and the farms were not that good, of course we had no fertilizers. So they paid their own taxes and they got the money to take care of the school from the community. In the area where I was raised, it was bottom land and the people were well-to-do and had good houses, barns, and that sort of thing. They had more money because they could tax them more but that was the way they did it. They did not get any help from outside the community or anybody else as far as the money was concerned.

VIC: Did they have to buy books?

BEULAH: Yes, right. They bought their own books. The common practice was to pass it down to the next child, if you were going to have another child coming up. If you did not, you always knew who was in each grade the year before and you asked them for it. You had to pay them.

VIC: Maybe they would trade them too?

BEULAH: Yes, Yes. Trading them as a good idea. They would trade if you had a book their child could use, but other than that you had to pay for it. Children took very good care of their books, I guess because they knew mom and dad had bought them. They were not marked up. The books we would get from other people were well taken care of. Now why that was, was because of the time. Now

children sometimes mark in their books pretty bad.

VIC: Can you describe a typical day before and after school, the things you had to do to prepare for school or anything you had to do with clean-up after school?

BEULAH: I had to have a teacher's book and some of them were teacher's manuals. Our curriculum was sent out by the state and sent to the county superintendent, then the county superintendent would prepare those and send them to us. Usually you had to go to a week before school started where all the teachers in the county went in for a week of orientation. I do not know what they would call it today, but at that time they called it "teacher's institute". They would have meetings from morning till late afternoon. At that time, cars were not common so most us stayed in Mankato, the county seat, and we had classes and review. We would kind of go over the books we had and were going to use that year. We had teacher's manuals like you do today that had an outline of the material. I can't think of the name of it, but each school got one of those.

VIC: Did you have any janitor duties?

BEULAH: You had to prepare your lesson plans for all different grades, if you had a grade, you had to make your plans for those children because you did not have time to go look up anything. We had in all but Ash Creek, where I went to seventh and eighth grade, a good library, encyclopedias, and everything. Other schools had no books you learned just what the teacher knew or what the teacher

could present and the lessons from your own books. You had to prepare that and have yourself ready. I only had five grades. Thank goodness! If you had all eight grades you had to prepare the seventh and eighth grades and on down to the first grade. Then you had to do everything you wanted done after school. When you went there in the morning you had to start a fire, until it got cold you just went. I did anyway because I would get my things done the night before. My husband, who taught in a one-room schoolhouse for two years, wanted to go home after school. Nobody told you how long to stay. He would go early in the morning and sweep his floors. I cleaned my floors when school was out, sometimes you could have some of the children help you if you wanted. I had Gilbert, that helped me sweep. The older children would bring in the water because you had to bring it in from the well. We had a bucket and in that bucket you had a cup and everybody drank from the same cup. It was a tin bucket usually and they would bring the water in and everybody drank from the same cup. I do not know of any school where everybody had their own individual cups at that time. When you had to have a fire, you had to get there early enough to start your fire and get the room warmed up. You had a pot-bellied stove that was in one corner that most schools had and it was real hot around close to it. At the back of the room, it sometimes got cold. On real cold days we would bring our chairs or sit on the

floor close to the stove to keep warm.

VIC: How are teaching ways or habits different now than when you taught in a one-room schoolhouse?

BEULAH: Oh my! I do not know how to start on that because everything is different. Do you mean in the schools where children are going now?

VIC: Right.

BEULAH: The materials that they have, the aids that they have and all the things they have and bring to school. Their knowledge is so different there is just no comparison. Back then they did not travel. A lot of youngsters would go to town maybe once a week, or once every two weeks. The only persons they would be playing with would be the neighbors who might be a mile away or half a mile away. They would go to the neighbors to play back and forth. That was about all the social activities. If they went to church they would have that. You can think about how different that is today with television and radio.

VIC: Right.

BEULAH: There was not even any radio when I taught.

VIC: How were teachers expected to conduct themselves in the community? For example a code of ethics or morals.

BEULAH: You did not get married and teach school. No married person ever taught school at the time I was teaching down where I first taught. They watched you, you did not go anywhere. Your life after school and before

was an open book. They knew exactly what you did and you could be put out of that school so easily if you got drunk or any of those things like that. They also had some real strict rules or code of ethics that you as a teacher were suppose to conduct yourself by. You were suppose to be part of the community. You were suppose to go visit those homes and you were suppose to be in the homes. They would ask you for dinner and usually asked you to stay all night, too. Men and women, of course there were more women than men teachers, would be asked to go to homes and stay all night by the children. You were supposed to go and stay all night, you might not be able to go on the night they asked you but you were suppose to make arrangements so you could get there. That was social etiquette.

VIC: So generally you stayed with every family sooner or later?

BEULAH: Absolutely, throughout the year. They might ask you to just eat supper with them. That was a big deal to have the teacher come over.

VIC: Were you in charge of any extracurricular activities?

BEULAH: Yes, we had to watch the playground every bit of the time for playground supervision. As far as any sports or things like that we did not have anything. We had to put on the programs at Christmas time and all the schools did that. The last day of school we always had a dinner

and a program. The teacher put on the program and all the parents brought in potluck and we had a dinner. All the schools did that, it was just part of it. Even if the farmers were suppose to be in the field they came to that last day of school.

VIC: Was there a problem with teacher turnover?

BEULAH: Not at the time I taught because people were hungry for a job. It was very over supplied with teachers because if a girl went to high school, about the only professional job she had was teaching. Getting married and teaching around here was what she could do. Once in awhile you could get a job at the courthouse in Mankato or the stores in the towns might give you a job. Many times the store owners themselves could not have a lot of clerks because the stores were not that big.

VIC: Did more than one teacher work in the school?

BEULAH: No, you were responsible for everything.

VIC: Was there a principal for the school?

BEULAH: No principal. You were everything, you were principal, teacher, boss and everything else, including disciplinarian.

VIC: What evaluation system was used for the teachers?

BEULAH: We were evaluated by a county superintendent. He came out and he visited you. Then if you had any problems you could come to Mankato. If you needed something or had a discipline problem in your district you would go to the county superintendent. Then he would advise us, so he was

really the supervision personnel. He would come out two or three times unless you were having problems.

VIC: Were parents involved in the discipline process?

BEULAH: Yes, they expected you to take care of it in my district. I only had one time when two second grade boys were going home and Gilbert, the big boy, was walking the same direction. The parents came to me and said that Gilbert was roughing them up on the way home. They had to go a quarter of a mile together and then Gilbert went north and the other two little boys went on to their homes. The parents came to me and I was suppose to handle that. That was the time when I said to Gilbert "You must stay in your seat till after school because I want to talk to you." After the others had gone, he did not know what was going to happen. I said, "Gilbert, the parents of these two boys said that you are roughing them up on the way home from school. The only thing I know to do is to have you stay after school for five minutes and they will be past the quarter of mile by the time I let you go. Then the parents will be satisfied." I knew Gilbert was not wanting to hurt them, he was just having fun with them. He stood up, that was one of the scariest times in my teaching career because when he stood up he was taller than I was and a heavy, big guy. He was not too alert to what was going on but he thought I was stepping on his rights. When he stood up he said, "I am not going to stay." I told him he had to stay and asked him to get a

broom and help me sweep. After that he liked to stay because he could talk to me and I would talk to him while we were sweeping. I had no problem after that but it was scary. My heart was beating really fast because I thought he could knock me down and he had a reputation of being pretty rough and mean. The little children I had came from good families and I did not have any problems with them.

VIC: Did the female teacher handle discipline differently than the male teachers?

BEULAH: Yes, I am sure you have heard reports of some pretty hard paddling by the male teachers. Sometimes those boys got pretty big because they went to school until they were sixteen years old. They were in the one-room school with all of the other children. Some of the schools were pretty rough. My husband took over a one-room schoolhouse one time for one half of one year when they ran the other teacher out. They would just do everything bad because there were four boys in that school and the teacher was small. She had to quit because they took over. When my husband took it over that was the end of that. He only got fifty dollars a month when he took over that school because he was a farmer. (Laugh)

VIC: Where did you live while teaching at the North Star school?

BEULAH: You were expected to room in the district. There was always a home there that they wanted you to stay in

and pay board. Well, maybe not always but most of the time. I lived five miles away because I wanted to stay at home. The school board said that I could drive back and forth but I had a home, Mrs. Eda Byers, that I could stay at anytime that it stormed. I did stay when my folks and my brothers and sisters had the mumps, so I had to stay there more than one time. I stayed several weeks, I had to pay four dollars a week for board and room. When you only had seventy dollars a month, that really took out some money.

VIC: You have already partially answered this question but how much schooling did you have in order to teach?

BEULAH: You just had to have normal training, twelve years. Eight years of elementary and four years of high school. You had to be a high school graduate and pass the state normal training. That was not the easiest thing because you had all of the subjects: history, Kansas history, math, English, and reading. All those subjects you had to test on. Unless you had a good teacher, many times in a class you would have failures.

VIC: So those were the subjects you studied?

BEULAH: Yes, whatever they had. All the subjects you had to teach, you took a test in.

VIC: How long was your school day?

BEULAH: It was suppose to be from nine until four.

VIC: How long was your school year?

BEULAH: When I first started school it ran seven months,

but when I started teaching it went to eight months.

VIC: Did you have any particular teaching methods you used back then that you could tell me about?

BEULAH: Well, just to get the subject across, you had to work on how that child behaved. Many times they did like we do today, they just followed the curriculum and each day you presented what the book had you do. You did not have any resource materials to go to as much as people do today.

VIC: Did you have any teaching aids at all?

BEULAH: Yes, the chalkboard and chalk, a little paper, mostly tablets that the kids had. You always had an extra tablet, pencils, and erasers because they might run out. The teacher always had to have those on their desk because the children would forget to bring some.

VIC: Did you have any special classes or unique education services offered like special education, LD, or Title reading programs?

BEULAH: Are you kidding? I think you are kidding. No way, in town school I had a mongoloid, and a child that has seizures in the first three grades. I had a little boy that had sugar diabetes but that was after I went to town school and I had a principal over me and a superintendent too. In the country school, if they lived in the district they came or if they were too bad they stayed at home but whatever child showed up you were suppose to take them.

VIC: Can you describe for me a typical school day curriculum?

BEULAH: You mean what we taught?

VIC: Yes.

BEULAH: Usually you had such a short time for recitation for each child. You had to give the first grade the most time because they could not do much on their own. We would start in with the first grade when all the children would have math and you would have the first grade come up for recitations. One or however many you had would sit at the little seat in front and you presented your lesson. The first grade was then sent to the board to do something while you presented the lesson to the second, third, fourth, and so on. So you see, you had to be prepared ahead of time, you just could not go there with no preparations, you would have chaos. Fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth had to do a awful lot of things on their own because the teacher was so busy with the lower grades. Then the next period you may have reading, then English, and so on. You just had the basics but you always had Kansas history in the seventh and eighth grades. The child had to do a lot of reading and if you could not read, that would be bad.

VIC: Were there any competency tests taken for promotion purposes?

BEULAH: No, only out of grade school you had to prepare your students for a county test which was really a state

test sent out to the county. The rural school children, the eighth graders, went to a common school where four or five districts were sent. They might go to town school, it was according to how close they were. They would then take the test sent out by the state. Teachers did not get a test but you had to prepare them for it and if you had a record of not having students pass the eighth grade test, you were considered a poor teacher. So they really put the emphasis on preparing those children for that test. They did not know what the questions were going to be so you had to cover the book. For instance, history, you had to prepare that child because you did not know what was on the test.

VIC: Did the North Star school have a library?

BEULAH: No, not many schools did. The school I attended did, I keep going back to it because it was a well equipped with books. That was when I got my start in really reading books.

VIC: How did you decide on a textbook?

BEULAH: We did not get to decide, that was decided by the state. The state sent out an outline and the book you were suppose to use. Even the county superintendent did not have any choice.

VIC: Where did you get your books from?

BEULAH: Some towns like Ionia, Jewell, or Mankato would be sent books. The pharmacy in Mankato handled the textbooks but it was whatever book the state said we had

to order. If they ended up with too many books they could send them back but that was set up by the state completely.

VIC: What was the atmosphere of the educational program?

BEULAH: It was strict, most farm children came to school to learn, not all of them. When they got older they would rather be out farming or outdoors, so you might have problems with them. Most of the farm youngsters were good kids. The teachers were pretty strict and they were allowed to turn them over a desk and give them a paddling if they wanted to.

VIC: What were some of the school rules then that might be different from today?

BEULAH: The teacher was the boss, unless you step out of line too much. You might have a parent that thought you were abusing their child. That would happen sometimes and they would come to the school and cause the teacher to have a lot of heartache. It was her or his decision and sometimes with the big boys the teachers would slap them or things like that because they were misbehaving. So they had problems that way. I did not have any because I did not have that kind of children. I know of teachers that did have to go through that.

VIC: Other than the Christmas and end-of-the-year programs that you already mentioned were there any other special observances that you had in your school like

spelling bees, or birthdays?

BEULAH: Yes, we always had birthday parties where the mother would bring or send a cake or something for the birthday. Several schools would go together and have spelling bees and ciphering contests. We started that in our district. We always had what we called a box supper in every school that was a way of raising money to get paper and other things, that you wanted. No construction paper or things like that were furnished. The box supper was when the moms would fix up a box real pretty with crepe paper and then they would put goodies in them. The girls would then take the boxes and the mothers too sometimes, of course the husbands usually bought their boxes. The girls thought that was a big deal, if some boy you liked got your box you were really happy. Sometimes they would pay quite a bit of money for a particular box.

VIC: Did the North Star school have a graduation exercise?

BEULAH: No, when you got to the eighth grade, all the graduates came to Mankato and the county superintendent had a speaker and he arranged for all of that. You usually did not have exercises in your own district because you might only have one student. I just had Beth, the first year, that was in eighth grade.

VIC: Do you know when the schoolhouse was built?

BEULAH: The schoolhouse where I taught was really old. I would not have an idea what year it was built. School

houses were always on the corner of a section and some owner of the land would give that land for the school. They never bought it. My grandparents, both of them, when they came here, as pioneers, they gave land for the school buildings. The buildings were really on both grandfather's land that they had homesteaded. That is usually where the schools were in the community. The community would get together and build the school usually by themselves.

VIC: As a group they would build it?

BEULAH: Yes.

VIC: What materials were used to build this schoolhouse?

BEULAH: The first ones were just wood framed. Wood everything. In the district where we last lived it was made of brick that was brought in. It was a lovely school.

VIC: Where did they get the material from to build the school?

BEULAH: They did not have as many trees as there are here now. So many of the trees we have today have grown up over the last twenty years. So even for some of the homes they had to go down to the river at Beloit where the trees were growing along the river. Out here it was mainly prairie when people first moved here, even the creeks did not have many trees on them. They would go get the lumber and saw it in a saw mill that someone in the community had

or that sort of thing.

VIC: North Star school was a public school?

BEULAH: Yes it was open to everybody in that district, you did not go from one district to another. You just did not, you went to your own district. When I went to school in the eighth grade I had to go into Ionia to a town school because I was sick, I had quinsy for a month, and I did not get to review for my test, only what I did at home and so my folks were afraid that I would fail because the teacher had not helped me for the last month of school before I took the test. My mom and dad had to pay for me to go into Ionia. It was only twelve dollars which is not much but it was a lot to us at the time. The town schools made up their own test so they let me go to school the last month there because I only went seven months in the county and Ionia went eight months. I passed the test and surprised my parents.

VIC: What type of heating, lighting, and toilets were available?

BEULAH: Usually wood was used in the stoves but sometimes they would go to town and get coal and burn the coal in the pot-bellied stoves. The water came from wells that you pumped. The lighting you did not have much because of the daylight and had windows on both sides of your schoolhouse. The first year I taught that was the kind of building I had. The floors were really bad and the seats were fastened down to the floor. It was so hard to sweep.

The second year I taught at North Star they remodeled that schoolhouse and it was a real improvement. They did as much as they could according to what they called the modern day specifications. They put the windows all on one side and closed up the windows on the other side, inside and out. They put hardwood floors in and painted inside and out. They sanded all of the desks so when I went back in the fall of my second year of teaching, I had a like new schoolhouse.

VIC: Did you have kerosene lanterns or anything like that?

BEULAH: Yes, kerosene lamps.

VIC: Were the toilets actually outhouses?

BEULAH: Yes, right. The teacher was suppose to keep those clean and I had to laugh because the first year that the county superintendent came to see me I was so scared. He came out and went into the outhouses and schoolhouse. He would see if your desks were clean and if the floors were clean. He went to the outhouses to see if you kept them up too. I would take a bucket of water out there and scrub them every once in a while. The teacher did that!

VIC: Is there any significance behind the school name of North Star or why was it named that?

BEULAH: I do not know.

VIC: Can you give me an idea of what the interior of the school looked like?

BEULAH: Yes, there were windows on both sides, the east

and west. The north side was closed and that was where the teacher's desk, stove, and the chalkboard were. Then in the back you had a cloak room or an entrance room and that is where you hung your coat and put your dinner pail. Everybody had to bring their dinner and they did not bring it in paper sacks because they did not have paper sacks. They brought their lunch in syrup cans, if you had a pretty dinner pail you were really high class. Most kids had one-half gallon pails unless two or three of them brought their dinners together, then they would have a big gallon pail. They were round cans somewhat like a Crisco can and they had a metal lid on it. You brought whatever mom had fixed for you, sometimes that was a sandwich, apple or maybe even a cookie or those type of things. The dinner you took to your own seats and ate. Two or three of them might get together if they had the same lunch pail and eat up at the front where there was a little table.

VIC: Who was in charge of the upkeep of the building?

BEULAH: That was up to the school board. There were three school board members and if you had a problem, like a broken glass, then you reported it to the school board. In the summertime they always did whatever they could to make it better for the fall. If they did not have to do anything then usually the school board wives or the school board would go in with buckets and scrub the inside down. They would clean the windows, wash down the walls and sometimes paint them. They would scrub the floors and

scrub your desks. So when you went in the fall everything was ready.

VIC: What special events happened at the school?

BEULAH: They always had the election at the school and you got a day off. Most of the other schools had this day off. Sometimes we would go to the other schools and have a spelling bee or something like that but it was usually a special occasion. I can't think of any others.

VIC: Do you know of any physical problems that the building had while you were there?

BEULAH: No, I can not think of any.

VIC: What happened to the schoolhouse after you left?

BEULAH: They consolidated schools and that area went back to the owner that had given the land. Some of them were kept up.

VIC: What happened to the actual building?

BEULAH: I do not know for sure. I think they tore it down.

VIC: What happened to the equipment and supplies that were in the school?

BEULAH: They had sales because there was sentimental value in the desks, I have some in the basement. They would have a sale just like a farm sale only it was a schoolhouse sale.

VIC: Why was the school built?

BEULAH: The parents that came here wanted their children educated. The people who came to Kansas, like my

grandparents came from Illinois, and they were from a populated area and when they came to Kansas they wanted their children to have an education. All the people that came had that common desire and they were not backward people when they came to Kansas.

VIC: What were the boundaries of the school's jurisdiction?

BEULAH: It was according to the population usually it was about a four mile square area. If you went two miles south of where this schoolhouse was you would probably find another one. Maybe four miles at the most and that is the way it was.

VIC: Do you know how it was decided who went to school there?

BEULAH: That area was marked out when they made the school and if you lived within those boundaries, you went to school there.

VIC: Did that ever change for any reason?

BEULAH: Not that I know of.

VIC: Was the schoolhouse used for community social activities as well as for education?

BEULAH: Yes, a lot of them did. That was their community center. Our district did not have too many activities because their church was their center which was right across the road from the schoolhouse. That was more their community center than the school. My school was not typical though.

VIC: What were some traditions peculiar to the North Star school?

BEULAH: The programs but as far as anything else special, that was all they had.

VIC: Do you remember any of the school board members names?

BEULAH: Oh yes, Mr. Joe McDill. When I first graduated from high school and took normal training, there were ten students in my class and two of them did not pass. There were eight of us who went out into the community and I was one of only two that got a job. When I went out, I went directly to those school board members after I had sent them a resume when I found out about the vacancy and told them I would like to be considered. When I went to visit Mr. McDill, he was setting out fruit trees the lady at the house told me. He had two little girls playing where he had dug for the fruit trees. I stopped to visit with the two little girls for awhile. I asked them about school and about what they were doing. Then I went off to see him and he said, "You are Beulah Miller and you are hired." I was so stunned I did not know what to do because that did not happen very often since there were so many people. His reason for doing it he said was because I had stopped and visited with his children when I could have passed them by. He said, "My two little girls are the most important thing I have and I think you are interested in them." So he was my friend all the rest of

the time. There was a lady Mrs. Gracy Byers, she was a husky lady with a big man's voice that scared me to death. Mr. Blacker was the last one.

VIC: Are they all deceased?

BEULAH: Yes.

VIC: Did you have any organization similar to a PTA?

BEULAH: They did have a meeting once in awhile. I can not remember how often we had it but they would come in and it was just social.

VIC: Who hired and fired the teachers?

BEULAH: School board, they did everything. The were elected for that.

VIC: Did anyone else have input?

BEULAH: If there was a complaint they were to go to the school board and then the school board came to me.

VIC: Were there any activities that took place between schools?

BEULAH: Yes, they had ciphering matches and spelling bees. That was mostly up to the teachers, that was not anything prescribed.

VIC: Are there any controversies surrounding the North Star school that you can remember?

BEULAH: One thing. They thought Mr. McDill, who was chairman of the board, took a lot of privileges without consulting the school board. The same thing we have problems with today, someone always stepping on someone else's toes. That is the only thing I remember.

VIC: Did the school make any lasting contributions to the community?

BEULAH: Not that I know of.

VIC: Do you know why the school closed when it did?

BEULAH: Because of consolidation. They sent their children into Jewell when they reorganized and consolidated.

VIC: Where did the funds for the construction of the school come from?

BEULAH: From the district. The district paid for it.

VIC: Did the community help finance the construction?

BEULAH: They were taxed according to what they needed. The school board figured out the budget and that was sent to the county seat. The county then taxed the property accordingly. If you had a rich district and a poor district, the poor district supported his own district and the rich supported theirs. You did not get state aid or federal aid or help from anybody but yourself.

VIC: How much did it cost a student to enroll in a school?

BEULAH: No money except for books. I can not remember exactly what the books cost but they did not pay any money to go to the school other than their books, paper, and pencils.

VIC: What was your salary when you first started teaching?

BEULAH: I was lucky because I got seventy dollars a month

for eight months. The next year I wanted a ten dollar raise. Since they were going to remodel my school building they said they just could not possibly afford more than a five dollar a month raise. That is five times eight, you can figure it out. So I took it. Mr. McDill had a girl in first grade and another girl in fifth grade the next year. On the last day of school they had a board meeting and they told me to come in. Mr. McDill told me if I would come back that he would pay the additional five dollars, that was a total of forty dollars for the year. Well, big-hearted me, I told him if you can not really afford it, I will come back for the five dollar raise. So I did, because my mother said it was better to go back a second year in the same school than to be moving around. If a teacher moved around from place to place, people thought there was something wrong with her. Even though she might have found a better job someplace else.

VIC: What was your salary your last year of teaching?

BEULAH: I just taught two years in a one-room school so I only got seventy-five dollars there.

VIC: The salary was determined basically by the board?

BEULAH: Yes, by the school board. A lot of teachers were only getting fifty dollars a month. You had to pay board and room out of that. I only had to pay four dollars a week where I stayed. Even though I stayed Saturday and Sunday because Mrs. Byers, the lady I stayed with, had a daughter in the fourth grade and one in college. She

really did not do it for money, she just liked having you.

VIC: So you did your own negotiations as far as salary was concerned?

BEULAH: Yes.

VIC: How did you get your pay checks?

BEULAH: You got a monthly check, seventy dollars, they did not have to take out any income taxes or anything out of your check because at that time you did not have any income tax. You had taxes on property but you did not have income tax