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### Master Teacher Interview - Mrs. Lucille Luckey

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Master Teacher Interview  
Mrs. Lucille Luckey

for  
Dr. Allan Miller  
Doris Meng

by  
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In partial fulfillment of requirements for  
Research Seminar in Education

Summer 1988

## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to collect responses from a Kansas Master Teacher, Mrs. Lucille Luckey, a retired Dodge City teacher. Her responses concern her past experiences in the teaching profession, as well as her thoughts and points of view about teaching and education today. The interview was recorded on video tape and later transcribed.

#### Variables

The variables of this study were:

The teacher: The Master Teacher and her experiences in the teaching field.

The student: The children who were taught by the Master Teacher.

Curriculum: Grades taught, materials used, and objectives stressed by the teacher.

Certification preparation: The teacher's certification background.

Supervisors: Administrators, school board members, and others to whom the teacher is responsible.

Teaching styles: Teacher's personality and ability to interact with students.

Teaching methods: Teaching techniques such as organization, structure, and types of testing which affect teaching and learning.

Discipline: Rules students were to follow and the manner in which the teacher enforced those rules.

Grade level: The various levels of education taught during the teacher's career.

Length of service: Number of years the teacher has taught.

#### Background

Mrs. Luckey was a teaching colleague for a number of years, and is well known in the area as an exceptional teacher, as well as being a highly respected person in the community and in the church. Her experiences as a black teacher in a predominantly white school, and as an ordained minister in a public school, make her responses especially interesting and thought provoking. By preserving her oral history, others will be able to share her insights and philosophies concerning schools and education.

#### Significance of Study

This study's significance is two-fold. In preserving the experiences, values, teaching methods, and philosophies of a Master Teacher, one can gain a better understanding

of the history of ideas in education. Of equal importance is the concept that master teaching involves certain observable factors, and that the preservation of a Master Teacher's broad-based responses concerning teaching can be of help to future educators in bettering their profession.

#### Research Objectives

1. Identify effective teaching methods and styles.
2. Identify and describe the schools' changing role in education, and how these changes have affected our children and teachers.
3. Identify and explain viewpoints pertaining to current educational issues.
4. Describe the teacher's background in preparation for entering the teaching field.
5. Describe the qualities that distinguish a Master Teacher from a mediocre one.
6. Identify the role of the teacher in education today.
7. Discuss changes that might improve education in our schools today.
8. Explain and describe teaching philosophies from a Master Teacher's point of view.

## Chapter II

## Interview Transcript

SUE: I'm Sue Pallister. We're here today to interview Mrs. Lucille Luckey, a retired Kansas Master Teacher in Dodge City, Kansas. Also participating in the questioning will be Craig Pallister. Mrs. Luckey, first, thanks for letting us come in and interview you.

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I was just glad to do it.

SUE: I know that you have a busy schedule, even though you're retired. Could you talk a little bit first about some background information, just about you and your early days?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I went through the Dodge City schools, beginning at Sunnyside School.

SUE: You were born here?

MRS. LUCKEY: No, I was born in Garden City, but we moved here. Incidentally, I'm a twin. Mother lost the other twin when we were quite young. And so we moved here, and I went through Sunnyside School, and then through junior high, which was where the administration building is now. Then through high school, and of course through junior college, which was upstairs where the high school is. We had thirty-five students.

SUE: In the whole school?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yes.

SUE: O.K. That's small.

MRS. LUCKEY: And then I was majorette in the band, which was quite an accomplishment in those days, if your skin wasn't just the right color. I think I really went for it because nobody thought I could. And so I did that four or five years. At that time, you had to play an instrument to be a twirler in the band. And I did office work, and when I was in junior college my major was business.

SUE: So teaching wasn't first?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, not at first.

SUE: Can you give us a brief description of Northwest School, because you taught there for--twenty years?

MRS. LUCKEY: Twenty years.

SUE: And that was the school you were in when you won your award. Tell us some things about the school.

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I always thought it was the best, but I guess that's natural. When I first started teaching there, I suppose we had about nineteen or twenty teachers. When I finished, I think we had between twenty-five and thirty, counting the co-op and all this. And we had about four hundred, close

to four hundred students, when I started in that school. When I finished, I think we were getting up closer to six hundred, maybe. And we had, of course, the parents; most of them were, I suppose, college educated. So the children, really this is kind of their goal, too, to go to college and be professional people. And I would say probably middle to upper middle income.

SUE: We talked a little bit about how you got into teaching. How did you decide to go into teaching? Did someone give you a little push?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yes, it was sort of a challenging thing. I was talking to someone one day, and they told me they didn't think they would ever hire any black teachers in Dodge City.

SUE: And that did it.

MRS. LUCKEY: I know it sounds pretty challenging. And so I didn't--I thought that couldn't be, surely. And so I went out, and the person who really gave me the boost was Dean Davis, who was at the junior college. And he said, "Well, sure you can do it. I'd just go for it." And so I did. I went back and took education hours, and from then it was just, you know, extension classes, Saturday classes. And

incidentally, I had lived in Los Angeles and Albuquerque-- could have gone back to school in either place and finished, but I guess, maybe it just wasn't supposed to be that way. So I went back and kept at it until I finished. Then I did substitute teaching.

SUE: Then your first teaching job was in Dodge?

MRS. LUCKEY: Full time, yes--right at Northwest. At one time at Northwest, they were going to call me to substitute, and the principal that was there at that time didn't think the parents would stand for it, so I was called to go there, then they called it off. And that was quite a coincidence, that my first teaching job was there.

SUE: Yes. Did you enjoy substituting, in comparison to your full time teaching?

MRS. LUCKEY: It was alright, but I didn't enjoy it as much. You don't know what to expect when substituting. And so I enjoyed regular classroom.

CRAIG: That's a tougher job than a regular classroom teacher.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. Substituting is.

SUE: Did you substitute pretty much full time then?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yes, it was pretty much. Kept me pretty busy.

SUE: Well, what is your philosophy of teaching? I know that is a pretty broad question, but what do you think is most important in a good teacher?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, of course you have to educate the children intellectually. I think also you have to go physically, mentally, even a little spiritually sometimes. Not a religious route, but just to, you know . . .

CRAIG: Kind of the values?

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. The values in life. They don't always get it sometimes.

SUE: I think that's true. Do you think that kind of teaching comes from instinct and the kind of person you are, or is that something you can really learn in college classes?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I think really you have to . . . I feel like it's kind of like a gift--teaching--because I feel like everybody can't do it. And so I think you also have to be prepared for it, and you have to enjoy it. You have to really enjoy working with children. If you don't enjoy working with children, then I think it's the wrong field for a person, unless they can laugh with them, and cry sometimes.

SUE: Don't you think that kids are aware of when you're not that kind of person?

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, right. We had just a real . . . I don't know, with my kids we just had a real loving . . . I don't know, it was just enjoyable.

SUE: I know the kids in your class have enjoyed you, because I know some kids that have been in your classes. In what ways have teaching, or education as a whole, changed since you started, because you taught for . . . how many years?

MRS. LUCKEY: Nineteen.

SUE: A lot of changes?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I'd say there were a lot of changes. More book work, record keeping. I don't feel like you really have the freedom that we had when I was young. You know, you could take out some time, and stop with the class, and really do something fun, and it really didn't cut out time you'd be spending trying to finish two books, things like this. You'd get back to that. You didn't feel "rush-rush, I should be doing this, I've got to do my records, I've got to do that."

CRAIG: Maybe it wasn't quite as structured. You didn't have to get them to each reading level.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, yeah, right. You know at a certain time you had, I would say, relaxed administration,

where the elementary supervisor would come in and sit down, and you didn't feel pressure behind it. I think when the administration is relaxed, the teachers are relaxed, then students are relaxed. I think it comes right down through the ranks.

SUE: We talked a little bit about your teacher training. Do you think it has become more professional at the college level? I know they were thinking about adding another year to requirements for teachers.

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I don't know, because I'm not really up on what they are doing at the colleges now, for teaching. But I do think they can use a little more practice.

SUE: In the classroom?

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, in the classroom. And some may need it at the beginning, and some right at the end, because if you get in on student teaching at the end, then you know how to close it up. But when you go into the job (teaching), and you go in for the first part, this is all new to you, you haven't had it.

CRAIG: Oh yeah, the beginning of the year is a lot different than the ending.

SUE: That's when you need the help, too.

MRS. LUCKEY: And then some go out at the beginning, and they don't know what it's like at the end. So I

SUE: So you've always been in upper elementary?

MRS. LUCKEY: Um hum.

SUE: Well, in those upper elementary classes, what would you say was your biggest discipline problem, if you could narrow it down to one?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I can't say I really had any real discipline problems. No, you know, you work on talking without permission, things like this, but those are not real discipline problems.

SUE: Probably you knew how to take care of things so that they didn't become problems.

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I suppose so.

SUE: Do you think that a lot of that was due to the school you were in, the parents, the administration, and the teachers that preceded you?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, yes, I'm sure they had something to do with it. Then I think, too, that if you kind of let children know what you expect in the beginning, then you find out what to expect from them. And keep them busy. I think that's a big factor. If you keep them busy, whether it's real structured, or some fun things in between, I think if they're busy, you're not going to have as many discipline problems.

SUE: Well, this is kind of a question that you may not have an answer for, but considering students today, do you think that, maybe not so much at your level, but in junior high and high school, do you think that students are aware of the legal risks that teachers take when they discipline kids?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I think even in elementary school. You know, parents probably talking at home. And it's not like when I went to school. My mother said, "You act up at school, you know when I find out about it, you're also going to be punished at home." But now, I don't think parents are quite at that place. Of course, you do have some that say, you know, whatever you need to do. But children hear this talk, they're reading the papers, they're watching television, they hear it on the news. And I think even children know you can only do this or that. And with the in-school suspension, and out-of-school, they know just what it takes to go.

CRAIG: I was kind of interested in your teaching style. I know a lot of teachers are real strict, and some are fairly easy and like the kids to talk and do everything, and some teachers like to set at their desks and make sure kids raise their hands. What

style did you use? Did you feel like you were a strict disciplinarian?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I think you can allow them to have free time to talk. Elementary school, you can hardly just turn them loose and just let them talk. With our assertive discipline, your class is going to run a little smoother if everybody doesn't speak at once. They're going to have to have some hand raising. And probably I was a little strict with discipline, but we also had fun. We had interaction back and forth. We talked freely about things. They knew if they had any questions, they knew we could talk. Sometimes at the beginning of the day, we would talk about . . . You know, just ask about what somebody . . .

SUE: Get it off their minds in the morning?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yeah, right. Like at the end of school, the kids said, "Well, if you retire, who's going to tell us stuff?" And I said, "Maybe the next teacher will tell you stuff!" But I feel like we were relaxed and could talk and enjoy ourselves, but we had discipline. We could laugh and talk, but we knew when was the appropriate time.

CRAIG: Did you have a lot of interaction with your students? Did you come to know them and their families? You kind of hit on it at the beginning, that it wasn't a real relaxed atmosphere when you just started teaching, with the community and everything. But did you get involved with the students' lives outside: worried about them at home? did they get a breakfast? were they alright coming to school?

MRS. LUCKEY: You're right. And call them up sometimes, and talk to them. And sometimes parents would have me over for tea, or for dinner, or something like that. I think we had real good relationships. Sometimes I'd give them their spelling words over the telephone, to practice them. Had them call each other. Sometimes I'd call at night and give them an award if they, if the parents, said they'd studied their spelling or something like this. I think we had very good . . . Some of my students still keep in touch with me. One was in town the other day and called me up, and we went out and ate. She was from Oregon. I write letters, correspond with several of the students.

CRAIG: Do you agree with this? I've heard several times, and several administrators have talked to me about

it, if you call parents, the big majority of them are willing to help you, and will support you. Do you think they will?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yes, I think so. I think so, with the children that I've taught. Most parents that I call, they would do whatever they could, and you could see a difference, if the child was letting up. I even had one parent one time that even came to school, and sat in the classroom right beside him.

SUE: Was it effective?

MRS. LUCKEY: Very! He wasn't about to slip back into his former habits. One time, he kind of started, and I said, "Would you like a little company?" Oh, and he said, "No way!"

SUE: So that parent support is still important.

MRS. LUCKEY: And I think he is still making it from that. And she took off three days from her job to do this, but it sure paid off. I think parents are very supportive here.

CRAIG: One thing you hear on TV and the radio, and I think it really has made a big emphasis in education. Do you think that the breakdown of the family has drastically changed education? Are the schools having to do things that the parents used to? Like

we hit a little bit on values, manners, and being a good person.

MRS. LUCKEY: I think probably so, because in so many families both parents are working, and sometimes they just plain just don't have the time to hit everything. And then some parents expect the teacher to do it. That's why they send them to school.

CRAIG: Kind of changing, but a little bit on the values, though. Being so involved with the church here in town, and very active in the church, could you give your views on prayer in the schools? I know that President Reagan has mentioned it several times, that he would like to see it.

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I think . . . We always kind of took it as a choice thing, what the kids wanted to do. I think prayer is needed in everything. To what extent, I always tell the kids that I prayed before I left home, before the day. And it makes a difference, because prayer changes things. And if the kids said, "Well, can we just say the Lord's Prayer?" And of course, at St. Mary's, that was our training, to say it. So, only if kids want to, you know; I think it should be their choice at school. I think parents should pray with them before they come.

But at school, I think they should be allowed to have this as their choice. Because, you know, people don't think all this other stuff that's going on sometimes in the school is so wrong, so I think that, well, prayer sure wouldn't be.

SUE: Did you ever have any problems with doing that?

I assume you didn't.

MRS. LUCKEY: No. None. In fact, since that day, some said that they really liked that. I've never had a parent to say . . . I always thought it could be done if this is what they wanted to do. What do they call it? Prayer was not . . .

SUE: Optional?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yeah. Didn't have to do it. One time I told one of the principals, I said, "I want you to know that the kids want to do this, and I want you to know, so that if something is ever said, you'll be aware of it." He said, "You know, your class is doing so fine, whatever you're doing, just keep right on doing it."

CRAIG: The other day when we were here, we met your grandson, and do you think students today value education and learning? Would you say it's as important to him as it was to you when you were

that age? Or are there so many more things that he sees in the school?

MRS. LUCKEY: I think probably at his age it's more important to him. One thing, because of his mother finishing college and teaching for seven years, and always trying to get herself more educated. And so he probably is more aware of this, because already he knows he wants to be some type of doctor. I can't remember what kind of a doctor it is right now. It has to do with pediatrics. He already knows this is what he wants to do, and he's twelve years old. I hadn't thought about going to college.

CRAIG: Yeah, I think that's like what you said, that they're aware of so much more now. When I was twelve, I was more apt to be just out playing rather than thinking about being a doctor, or whatever.

MRS. LUCKEY: Money is so important now, that I think that's why they realize that it's going to take an education to get into that higher bracket.

CRAIG: Also in the news, I teach Current Events, there has been a push to the basics. Teaching ought to go back to the basics. Everything ought to be around reading, writing, and arithmetic, and get those areas before we get into the others. Do you agree

with that? Are we stretching education into too many areas?

MRS. LUCKEY: No, I think definitely . . . I don't know whether reading and writing would include language arts, such as spelling and English and all. I think that's very important, but I still think we need things like field trips, and to get out to see and learn. Sometimes I felt like it was just as important for a child, if their mother came in and said, "Hey, we're going to Chicago, and we're going to sit in on something that is going on, a speaker," I'd think, well great! They'll learn more from that than just sitting right here doing it, math and all those things, because work can be made up. I think experiences are important. I think it's too bad they just can't go around to businesses, or have one of those places like they have in Topeka where you get to go around and you get to work in a situation like a bank, and administrative things. I do think they have to have reading and writing and arithmetic. But there are other areas that they need also: health and definitely science.

CRAIG: O.K. I have one more question on current affairs. Do you think schools should be responsible for social

issues like AIDS education? This is a big one right now. If so, how would you like to see it handled? Should AIDS education, which is a big topic and is very vital to the health of kids, should it be taught in the elementary schools?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, definitely. I think the younger they start teaching it, down in elementary school and up, the more people are going to understand it. Children will learn about it, and it's for sure they're going to be in school with people with AIDS. The way they talk about it now, and the way it's going to escalate and have so many cases, I think the younger they learn about this, the better it's going to be for them.

CRAIG: And they'll probably relate it to their families, the older brothers to the parents, and everything.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, right. Yeah, I think they should. I don't know how they would handle it, other than in health class, or something like this.

SUE: Very basic?

MRS. LUCKEY: Um hum.

SUE: I'm going to switch topics a little bit. What are your feelings about SRA tests and minimum competency tests? Do you think they're valid, and good indicators

of how students compare? I know we do a lot of complaining about them.

MRS. LUCKEY: Yeah. Well, it's probably about the best they can do. But it doesn't always tell how a student compares with another, because maybe a student is having a bad day.

SUE: Especially elementary.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. Maybe came to school sick, or maybe asthma, or maybe got up and maybe didn't have a good relationship with everybody at home. Then they come and they take that test, and their mind is not with it. They go through and just check all, you know, this one and this one, and may not do well, and they could be a top student. You just couldn't compare that.

CRAIG: And that grade follows them all the rest of their . . .

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. All the rest of their lives they have that, that they didn't do well on the SRA test. However, I think there has to be some way that you can know where your child stands, and that's something that every teacher wants to know, and their parent wants to know. What are they doing well in? What do they know a lot about? What are their weak areas?

And the average student, I think it can tell us something, if we sit down and study it a bit. And we always have those that can do one in five minutes, or ten minutes. They're finished. They guessed, and ninety-nine out of a hundred, they're wrong.

SUE: How do you feel about homework in the elementary grades? Let's say in your third grade room, did you send a lot of homework home?

MRS. LUCKEY: I didn't send a lot of homework home. However, if they're having problems keeping up, and even doing what they're capable of, sometimes they need to take some home. Of course, there's always the chance then that they're going to get too much help, and you can't rely too much on it. And then some students, they love to take homework home, because older brothers and sisters are doing it. I think it gets them ready for fourth and fifth and sixth to have a little homework. But then there are those who do such a fine job, they don't really need homework. But then you have those who I'd rather see do a little homework, than keep dragging their heels.

SUE: So it's more remedial?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yes, but not a lot. Not a lot.

SUE: Well, I think students' time at home is narrowing. That kind of brings me to my next question. Do you think kids, even third graders, can get involved in so many activities after school, and in the evening, and on weekends that it hurts their school work?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, definitely. Sometimes they have so many things going on after school, music lessons, dance lessons, drill team, drum major, twirling, so many things after school, Scouts. And they say, "Well, I won't have time to do homework. I didn't have time to do it last night. We started out right after school was out, and went till bed time." I think these are good things, but I just don't feel that the child should be overwhelmed with them. And we say as teachers that we have to limit our activities.

SUE: I wondered if teachers can get involved so much that they really can't spend the time to plan.

MRS. LUCKEY: I got really involved with grading papers.

SUE: They take a long time.

MRS. LUCKEY: You know, in elementary school, you almost need another salary for homework. Grading papers, that's the thing I miss the most.

SUE: You miss grading papers?

MRS. LUCKEY: I miss it, but it's a good miss.

SUE: You like to keep busy in the evenings, I think.

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I am busy.

SUE: Well, that's true.

MRS. LUCKEY: You know I just miss . . . It feels good to be able to do something else.

SUE: You talked a little bit about assertive discipline, and I assumed you liked it. Are there any other trends that you especially liked, or disliked, like Madeline Hunter and the emphasis on learning styles?

MRS. LUCKEY: Hers was alright. I don't know that it would work all the time. I like the Glasser approach. I think I like his because it allows students to kind of open up. This circle thing, I've tried it in many areas. It just works nicely. You get people in a circle, and get them to interacting, and there's just something about it.

CRAIG: They're not looking at the back of another student's head, and they're seeing each other.

MRS. LUCKEY: So I liked that. I don't know of any other particular ones.

SUE: Do you feel that it's a teacher's job to be a provider of information, or is their job to teach kids how to learn for themselves, to learn to learn?

MRS. LUCKEY: I think both. I think children need to learn how to learn, and definitely to learn how to use the dictionary and the encyclopedia, and how to get these things down. But I also think the teacher needs to have quite a bit of information, because we know the students are going to ask a lot of questions. They expect you to be a walking encyclopedia. They, at home, would immediately say (well, I know my children did), "Well, I'll ask my teacher when I get to school." So, she's supposed to know it. And some parents may say, "Ask your teacher."

SUE: Did you feel that your undergraduate degree sufficiently prepared you for teaching? You knew everything you were supposed to know?

MRS. LUCKEY: I guess not, because I kept going! I kept going, so I guess that I didn't think that really prepared you. The work that I did to receive my Masters, I felt like it was a lot of on-hand doing and experiences. So, I thought that was good, things that you could kind of practice and use with your own students. I just think the longer you go, the more you learn. I think that's important.

SUE: Do you feel like you learned more after? I've heard so many teachers say this. I learned more the first year teaching than I did in all four years of college preparation. Do you think that's true for you?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, how to teach, right? Well, sure, probably. Well, not altogether, but probably a lot, because you're right there involved in it, and, of course, you're going to learn from that. You don't really learn how to do it with books, reading and all this. It's getting in there and doing it.

CRAIG: This is like "How many decisions does a teacher make every day?"

MRS. LUCKEY: Yeah, right.

CRAIG: From lunch money to everything else.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, right. Then I work at night sometimes, and keep making decisions. You know, what can I do tomorrow?

SUE: It's hard to turn it off.

MRS. LUCKEY: And so I definitely think that going hard makes it a lot better.

SUE: But you do feel like your Master's degree hours were beneficial?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yeah. I think those are. Right, right. I enjoyed those.

SUE: Where did you get your Master's degree?

MRS. LUCKEY: From K-State.

SUE: We kind of talked about this. When I started teaching I felt like when I could say that I'd taught for five years, I would really know what I was doing. How long was it before you really felt like you had a handle on it, really felt like you knew what you were doing, were an effective teacher?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I had learned a lot by the end of my first year, that's for sure. And probably the second and third year I thought I had it down pretty good, because I really thought, in my mind, I'll teach a couple years, and then maybe I'll go on and do something else. And by the end of that couple of years, I was hooked. The first year after I had thirty in my class, the very first year, I knew I'd better have a handle on it.

SUE: That probably made you be a disciplinarian.

MRS. LUCKEY: Yeah. I had thirty, but I had one of the best classes. And I've seen that they've gone on to being lawyers and teachers, and had other successes. I feel like maybe I had a little bitty part in that.

SUE: Maybe you didn't have much of a problem with this, but if you ever had a situation when you had to deal

with a student who simply would not do the required work, what do you do with those type of kids?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I usually sit down and talk to them, try to get them to understand a little bit. And kids do hear. They hear you. And sometimes I would kind of rearrange their work a little differently, and sometimes maybe not give them as much work. I kind of used the individualized approach, either in groupings, or just a single student. If he's having too many problems, maybe cut his work down. Maybe he can't do as much, you know. And sometimes I just had to let them know, and speak assertively to them, "You know, this is the way it's going to be here if we're going to accomplish anything."

SUE: So they knew that they had to get it done, but that you still cared about them.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, and I always allowed them to stay after school if they wanted to talk with me, because I was addicted to being there, I guess.

SUE: You were there anyway, right?

MRS. LUCKEY: I was always there, until kind of late. I never rushed out. So I always told them, "If you want to stay, you can stay, and if you want to practice math on the board, I can help you with it a little bit."

SUE: I'll bet they wanted to, too.

MRS. LUCKEY: And I did. I had some of them stay, and some of them could work so much better just there one-on-one, or just if I was doing my work after school, they could do theirs better without all the classroom full of students. And it never bothered me. If they want to stay, stay. Sometimes they had problems.

SUE: What was your secret to motivating kids to learn?

MRS. LUCKEY: To make them think it was fun. If they think it's fun, they'll move right along. And not to put them down all the time.

SUE: Lots of positive reinforcement?

MRS. LUCKEY: Right.

SUE: How do you encourage students to read, especially at home? You know, it's so hard to get a book into kids' hands.

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, we kind of kept track of our reading. Sometimes I had little sheets that they could color in and keep a record of their reading at home, how much they read. Then we would have book reports, and sometimes oral book reports, you know, where they could dress up like their character, and kind of put it on like a little play. And then this

"Book It" came in toward the last, and the kids like to do that.

SUE: We talked about individualizing in the classroom. How individualized do you think teaching should be? Can you do too much of that? I know you think it's effective, and it seems to me like it is, too.

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I suppose you could, because they're going out in the real world, where they're not always going to be, you know, the only one person. But I think it's good, because you have to find out where a student is, and you have to go from there; and in math, I always had it in math. I always thought I'd change it, but I never did, because some students just can work better; they understand, you know, catch on quicker. And I never believed in holding one student back, so that they could all be together, or making one work himself to death to try to keep up, because some of them just can't do it. It's just hard for them. So I kind of kept math, you know, meet with a small group, and have a session, and let them work, work with them, then take the other group. It keeps you busy.

SUE: Kind of like reading groups.

MRS. LUCKEY: Yeah. Yeah, you're busy. But it really pays off, because you have some students who are able to really finish the book and be able to do some extra things. And we always had an SRA Math Box in our room, and they could work through that, and work at the math center, and all these things.

SUE: And no one was working at frustration level.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, right. So I liked it. I guess you could overdo it, if you have too many centers and too much of that stuff.

CRAIG: Kind of an individualization. Knowing several elementary teachers, and you taught at the lower levels, do you think students that are struggling, is that the time to hold them back a year, or do you believe in holding students back?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, if they can't do the work for the next year, I'd really as soon hold them back than for them to have a nervous breakdown the next year. And I think it's better to hold them back if they're having problems in the lower grades, even below third grade. I think second grade. You know, if they're going to have problems, hold them back there.

SUE: It's easier to hold them back then, than to wait.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right.

CRAIG: I'm kind of going to switch gears here, again, and go back to current events. Are you aware of the report that came out a few years back called A Nation at Risk, when they had this commission that said that the schools are not doing the job that they should be and everything? Do you personally feel that the United States educational system is behind other countries? We keep hearing about how the Japanese students are doing so much better in science than the American students. What's your opinion? Do you have any opinion on this?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, just from what I've seen, the other countries have got something going over there that maybe we don't have going over here. And maybe they are a stricter--and I believe this is right--they are a stricter disciplined people. And I know the parents, even that have come over here, I think that we would be surprised at how they're working on discipline when those kids come home. And you know how our kids are out hopping, and skipping, and jumping, and keeping the mind free, you know. And I don't know, I suppose this is just, the people in the other foreign countries, I suppose this is their way of getting here. I don't know that their

kids have a lot of fun. But they sure seem to have a lot of learning discipline.

CRAIG: Teachers in education were really under fire when this came out. It was in the news. Everybody was talking about whether their school was doing it. Do you think it helped education, or did it just put the teaching profession and education down another notch, or do you think that there was something positive that came out of it?

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I think probably it made everybody take another look at it.

CRAIG: Made everyone aware of it?

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. I don't think we're bad, here in America, and especially Dodge City. I think our schools are really pretty good.

CRAIG: That was kind of what I was going to ask next. If you had to compare Dodge City maybe to New York and Lost Angeles . . .

MRS. LUCKEY: Oh, I'd take Dodge City. Because I've known people who've moved to Kansas, well, even Dodge City, from California, that they have had to put back because they just didn't have the learning. And out there, you know the way everything is all-- in New York and in California and all large cities--I

don't think they get the schooling and training that you do in a middle-sized town. I wouldn't want to go too small, but I just think we're a good place for education.

CRAIG: Do you think society will have to change before our educational system can really change? We're always saying that our schools are a product of what our towns and our people think, because really you get back to local control. The school board decides what's going to be taught and how it should be taught. So if society changes, will it make changes in the school?

MRS. LUCKEY: I think it probably will. I think teachers, since they're the ones teaching, should have a lot of input, and that brings you to a lot of things: salary, you know, getting the best because of salary and so forth. And so society is going to have to change to realize that teachers are professionals, and they need to be paid like professionals, and treated like it. Teacher Day U.S.A. and the other teacher day they have, you know, it seems like it goes by so--nobody pays any attention to it! And I think that people should be more aware, because if a child's going to be anything in life, have any success, it's going to be because of the teachers.

SUE: I've read that the teacher is the single most important influence on a child in school.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. I believe that. I personally don't believe you can ever pay a teacher that's teaching and doing a good job.

CRAIG: Teachers would be with the students seven hours a day, and a lot of times I bet the parents aren't even with that student seven hours a day.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right.

SUE: They're all out doing their extra activities. When you mentioned your grandson wanting to be a doctor, do you think that we really are going to get to the point where good qualified people just are not going to be going into teaching?

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, because when he said that, that he wanted to be a pediatrician, and I said, "You mean you don't want to be a teacher?" He said, "There's no money in it!" You see his mother taught English, sophomore English, where you work day and night grading.

SUE: Oh, English especially.

MRS. LUCKEY: The money wasn't there, and that's why she starting doing something else.

CRAIG: This kind of goes into my next one. Would you recommend someone going into teaching? You see a twelve-year-old or someone in college and you say, "Why don't you consider going into teaching?" Would you recommend someone going into education or teaching?

MRS. LUCKEY: I have. If I run into somebody that really loves children, and loves working with children, then I say, "Why don't you think about teaching because you get along with children?" And a lot of the time the children will say, "Well, is there very much money in that?" And I don't know, the kids are just money-oriented today, because you've got to have it; everything is so high. But I don't know that I would just kind of push and shove anybody into it. I would say that if you're not particular about your pay scale, and you love working with children, I think teaching, it's a rewarding thing, not as though as it's a missionary job. I hate to hear people say, "Oh, it's so rewarding. Oh, we can help them so much." You know, I hate for them to speak of it as that. You know, after you've gone through the children and they're out and successful, it is rewarding.

CRAIG: Are there any of your ex-students that are teachers? Do you know of any?

MRS. LUCKEY: Yes, I know; right now I can think of two here in Dodge City.

CRAIG: Then they're in the system?

MRS. LUCKEY: Uh huh. Right. They were in my classroom, and I go to meetings with them.

SUE: Do you think that a lot of people, when they decide to go into teaching, have no idea how much work it really is?

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. I don't think so. I think people used to tell me, "Well, teachers go at such and such time in the morning," and they think you go home with the kids! And they don't realize the paperwork that's involved, and especially elementary, that you have to prepare for about eight subjects in a day's time.

SUE: And every minute must be planned.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, right. Every minute. And they think teaching looks like a fun thing. And they think, you know, that's what I'd like to be. And so I say, you know, teachers and preachers are underpaid, and those are the people that are going to get you there.

CRAIG: Over the whole last nineteen or twenty years you taught, what was the one biggest change? Was it the facilities, the type of books you had, the support? If you had to say, what was the biggest change, positive I'm hoping, from the first till when you retired?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, one thing, the books changed. Well, not necessarily from when I first started teaching, but when I went to school, you know. There were never any other nationality kids in your reading book. We were just in a white world. You didn't know if there was anybody else. I didn't know anything about Paul Lawrence Dunbar, I didn't know anything about Sojourner Truth. I didn't even know these people existed. Now they're putting it in books a little bit. All I knew about was Little Black Sambo, and I didn't like that. I still don't. And now even in our reading books, I feel like they are just kind of coloring some faces, but at least they're trying to do something. So the books have changed. They're putting heavier material in books, because the minds are getting to where they can take heavier things. Some of the things they put in books now, the kids wouldn't even have known

what they were talking about. But kids can handle it, and they'll do whatever you expect them to do. And so I think that the books have changed; science, we're of course doing more with science now than what they did twenty years ago. And changes with the computer coming in. The computer, I think, has definitely made a difference. It looks like it's here to stay a while. Oh yeah, there have been a lot of changes. P.E. instructors for elementary school, that was much needed, where kids can really get into physical education. Then having the students that are in the co-op . . .

CRAIG: Special Ed?

MRS. LUCKEY: Special Ed. Right. Having them kind of in other classes, this has changed a lot because they used to be just on their own, in their own little rooms, own little class. And now you're apt to have two or three in your classroom.

SUE: Well, how did you feel about winning Kansas Master Teacher? Were you surprised?

MRS. LUCKEY: I guess I was overwhelmed, to say the least. Because when she came over and told me about it, I didn't give it much thought. I thought, oh, this is something that everybody is taking part in, and

so they'll let me know who wins. And after a little while, I talked to her one day, and I said, "Well, who is it going to be?" And she said, "Well, you are! I told you!" And then I just didn't even believe it. And then, of course, there's always those that take a negative outlook to it sometimes, you know, people you work with, and say, "Well, one reason you got it was . . ." Well, that kind of zaps you. Oh, well maybe I shouldn't have thought that this was such a great thing. But I was really happy about it. It's an exciting thing, because people send flowers, and letters, and your students send letters.

SUE: You must have had lots of support.

MRS. LUCKEY: So, yeah, it really was, and the banquet, it was just nice all the way through. Friends that you didn't think even thought much about you. I know from our school they even flew a plane, one of the teachers had a plane, and she took some people up. So it was just really nice.

SUE: Well, it's nice to see good teachers be recognized. I don't think that we do enough of that. When you look back over your teaching career, what are some of your fondest memories?

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I don't know. Probably just being able to help some student that had problems in previous years, and I think back on some of them. And the principals I had, I went through four principals. They were all O.K. I had some that were super. One drove all the way from Wichita to come out just for my retiring, and went right back. That was my first principal. And I got along real well with all of them, as far as I know. And there was something else I was trying to think of. Oh, and some of the special people I worked with. And I'm still real close friends with some of them. We still get together and go eat. They help make your teaching enjoyable. I had some that were just very special. And just working with the parents. I had some--all my parents just seemed like--just one encounter in all the nineteen years, and that worked out super. In the end she even brought her children to spend some time with me while she was out. She had to be away out of town for a while.

SUE: That's a pretty good record.

MRS. LUCKEY: And the kids wanted to stay with me, so I kept her children. So, I felt like they wanted me to keep them.

SUE: You picked the right profession, and you and everyone else is glad that you did.

MRS. LUCKEY: I enjoyed it. It's just nineteen years well spent.

SUE: Well, again, thanks for your time and for your responses, and we really enjoyed talking with you.

MRS. LUCKEY: Well, I've enjoyed it. It makes you kind of think back. You know, you haven't thought back for a while, and it kind of brings things to the surface. And you think, oh yeah, I'd almost forgotten. So I just think it's real nice, Master Teacher things, it's a real nice honor.

SUE: The icing on the cake.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right, right.

CRAIG: O.K. Thank you.

MRS. LUCKEY: Right. You're welcome.