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### Interview with a Master Teacher: Forrest Bond

Milt Dougherty

*Fort Hays State University*

Don Plinsky

*Fort Hays State University*

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Interview With a Master Teacher:

Forrest Bond

In partial fulfillment for the requirements  
of an M.S. Degree in Education  
Fort Hays State University

Submitted by  
Milt Dougherty  
and  
Don Plinsky

Summer, 1990

## Chapter II

### Oral History

MILT DOUGHERTY: Mr. Bond, the first thing I'd like to ask of you is to give me some background information on your education--where did you attend school, what degrees do you have, and that kind of stuff.

FORREST BOND: From elementary, right on up? I attended school in Nortonville, Kansas. In fact, I was born in a rural area right near there, and then during the difficult times, the early and mid 30's, my folks moved to Arkansas. They had read in an ad that Arkansas was the land of milk and honey. There was milk there, but we didn't find much honey. We moved down there, and I went to school in Arkansas my junior and senior years. I graduated then from Violet Hill, Arkansas, and I went from there into the service. When I came out of the service, my folks were up in Jefferson County in Nortonville, and a friend of mine was going to Ottawa University. I went down to Ottawa University and graduated from there. Three years I went to summer school, and by then I was old enough I needed to start thinking about making a living. So, I got a B.A. Degree from Ottawa University, and

like so many teachers did during that time--and still do I guess--I went summers to get my M.S. from K.U. in Administration and Guidance, and I think I finished up in 1957. Since that time, I've taken classes at Emporia State, Fort Hays, Pittsburg, and Wyoming University, and I think that's probably all, picking and choosing what might keep me up-to-date and that sort of thing. I think that's been about the extent of it.

MILT DOUGHERTY: So your degrees are in elementary education, and your Master's is in . . .

FORREST BOND: No, my first degree was a major in history and political science from Ottawa University and my minors in English and math and that's from Ottawa University, but I did my Master's Degree in Administration and Guidance.

MILT DOUGHERTY: Who would you say most influenced your decision to be a teacher?

FORREST BOND: Probably my parents because they wanted me to be a minister and a teacher was next in line. I don't know what this contributes to this whole business, but I had six brothers and sisters, and the next ones to me were considerably younger. So, I became a sort of surrogate parent much of

the time because my mother was sick a great deal, and it seemed like teaching just followed my general lifestyle there.

MILT DOUGHERTY: What would you say is your philosophy on teaching? And by that I mean do you think teachers are born teachers or can institutions make good teachers?

FORREST BOND: I don't think institutions can make good teachers. I think institutions can make better teachers out of people who are inclined to be teachers.

MILT DOUGHERTY: No, I don't know if there's anything you can add to that but . . .

FORREST BOND: I just simply think there are people who simply should not be teachers. I don't care how much schooling they get. I don't think some people have the qualities to make a good teacher; the colleges certainly aren't going to help them any.

MILT DOUGHERTY: We'll get to the qualities of a good teacher later. But what style of teaching did you use, and along with that, what methods did you use?

FORREST BOND: Well, I suppose rather old fashioned, rather authoritarian. I never had any question

who was to be in charge of the classroom. I thought that was probably part of my job. I thought I would decide what we were going to work on. There was a time when they thought you ought to have a meeting to start the day and visit with the kids, and they help you decide what you were going to do that day. Now, I don't ascribe to that particular theory. I feel it would generally be fair to say that my situation was a benevolent dictatorship. It was just as benevolent as the youngsters were willing to make it be.

MILT DOUGHERTY: And what teaching methods--and by that I mean today we have cooperative teaching, mastery teaching, and that kind of thing. What were your styles then?

FORREST BOND: That cooperative teaching bit, it's interesting they would come up with a program and a name for that. When I went to a one-room school, and later a two-room school, we were more divided up here in Williamsburg, but I always used cooperative learning, if I understand the concept correctly. I never had a situation where you couldn't use a youngster who wasn't having much trouble and have him help the one who was having

some difficulty. And that wasn't an excuse that the teacher could use to keep from having to work; it was a technique that worked well. It worked well for both youngsters. I taught--I presented--the material, explained the material; I expected them to do the work I presented them, and then we evaluated the work. If gaps were left, if we had problems and it didn't work the first time, then we took another shot at it. If it didn't work, we tried something else.

MILT DOUGHERTY: So that's mastery learning?

FORREST BOND: Well, that's what I would think. For years and years our curriculum was determined by a textbook and still is with all the things that are going on, but what was in the textbook and what we could get to in some kind of a decent sequence, we did and we went on. Of course, there was a time when they didn't learn it; they stuck around awhile and learned it before they went on to the next grade, but then we sort of got away from that.

MILT DOUGHERTY: That seemed to work well for you. How did you motivate students in general and the hard-to-motivate students more particularly?

FORREST BOND: You know, Milt, that's a question that is very difficult for me to answer, and maybe it goes back to that part of teachers being born or created. I never had an awful lot of trouble with that. Now you have to have expectations. Goals have to be spelled out--this is what we're going to do folks. I never considered the fact that it was going to be any other way. Some of this may sound self-serving; I don't want it to be, but I expected the youngsters to do what they had to up to their ability. Obviously, some were going to do better than others, but they were going to do what they were asked to do. It was up to me to differentiate a bit so I could keep their goals attainable. Nothing is more disappointing and discouraging than to given a youngster work that has to be attainable. That's no good as far as motivation is concerned. Anyway, it was understood that when the bell rang, we went to work and we did it immediately -- what we had to work on, what the lesson plans had called for.

MILT DOUGHERTY: What if it didn't pan out?

FORREST BOND: I suppose there was disapproval on my part and that seemed to be important to the kids



most of the time. If absolutely necessary, I was also able to get a great deal of cooperation from the parents.

MILT DOUGHERTY: That kind of leads us into the next question. How did you handle discipline then? How do you see discipline has changed now and is that good or bad--the change that has been made?

FORREST BOND: I think there's a tremendous breakdown in discipline. I don't like to be too negative about things. First of all, I guess I should consider myself fortunate in that the obvious disciplinary measures I did not have to use, many of them--privileges that were denied or something of that nature. Sure that's a method I used for "hands on kids." I have done that in grade school, many, many moons ago. I spanked kids occasionally. I didn't beat them, but it was a form that was effective at the time but that was not a method I used in the last years of my 35 years. In my last years, I never spanked anybody. I did things to timely get their attention, like taking a hold of a youngster once in a while when they tried to ignore me or I needed to get their attention. But the kids, we were friendly, not in the sense

that I was one of the kids--an enormous mistake, a common mistake, and I think teachers are breaking down, particularly, and I'm going to digress here a little bit as far as their appearance. I come from a long way back, but I never taught a class I didn't have a tie on. For example, if I got hot enough, I would take off my jacket. You've got to separate and yet be congenial with them.

MILT DOUGHERTY: OK, we'll get back to that a little later. We've talked about--you've implied at least--there's been a change in discipline. Do you see that as good or bad?

FORREST BOND: Bad. Bad. The example I like to use is they talk about the big "D" so much of the time, that it is going to be the salvation of education. They think of it in terms of dollars, which we keep hearing over and over again. I agree with the big "D" but I think it's discipline. It's worse in some areas than it is here, but you can't teach in an undisciplined classroom. I don't care who you are; if you don't have a disciplined classroom, and I'm not talking about a chair and whip, I'm not talking about that at all, there are guidelines of each one respecting each other's

opportunity to learn and if that's not going to come from the teacher, it's not going to come. Of course, you'd like for the kids to eventually adopt that philosophy, and I think we've come to the point that we tend to run scared, afraid somebody is going to sue, afraid somebody, as far as discipline is concerned, is going to do this or that. So we come up with gimmicks, and the gimmicks, and I'll tread on somebody's toes, but dropping beans in a bottle, for example, or something like that -- if it works for somebody, power to them, but to me it's a sort of cop-out.

MILT DOUGHERTY: OK, we're kind of changing gears here a little bit, but what do you think makes a good teacher or administrator?

FORREST BOND: All right, let's start with a teacher first; they're the same thing. Administrators don't want to admit this, but administrators have the same qualities that make up a teacher. I'm going to use some old clichès here, but they have to be devoted, dedicated to their job. It supercedes everything else. Those kids have got to be their first priority. If they're not and they let other things come in, they let some area like negotiations

or 40 other things come in; then they obscure the fact that we have only one reason for an educational system--it's for the youngsters. I'm not trying to play the violin here. That's exactly the way it is and unfortunately that gets away sometimes. People go into teaching with the attitude that I'm going to have to work a lot of hours. I figured up that when I kept up with all the activities and everything else I thought was important in my relationship to the students, you were around long enough to know--it was effective. And if you don't take that much interest in them, you're losing something, but if you do, it's going to cost you 60, maybe 70, hours a week. You have to forget about a 40-hour week or 32, or like some think 30 hours a week, or as some people think a teacher living in the school for six hours, five days a week and it's all over. They carry their briefcases home, and they do this. Teachers have to be willing to do that sort of thing if they are going to be an effective teacher. Now, they also have to like youngsters, like young people. Now, I've seen down through the years some very sad examples where we had some people teaching,

and they could hardly stand kids. Now that's ridiculous on the face of it, but it happens. And their education in the teacher's college, there's one of those cases where it didn't make them a teacher. Kids sense that. You don't fool the kids on that sort of thing. But you genuinely like them and respect them, but at the same time, set up the program which incidentally they don't resent. When they know this is the way it's going to be when I get into that class, this is what we're going to do--period--and I mean I want to do it. It may not be the most pleasant thing in the world, but that's what I'm expected to do, and, I think, what I'm going to do. Kids accept that; in fact, they appreciate it.

MILT DOUGHERTY: I think you've answered a lot of this question, but what made you an award winning teacher?

FORREST BOND: I could say some real good PR on the part of some people that wrote recommendations.

MILT DOUGHERTY: That may be a part of it, but . . .

FORREST BOND: I'm not to go tootin' the horn on that because I have some theories on that too. For one thing, if someone's to get the kind of award I did, for example, he's going to have to stay in

one place, usually for a long time. That's going to be one of the requirements, and as it happens, they let me stay over here for 35 years. Suddenly, I'm in a rural community, and until recent times, a very stable community. I've been a part of the community and so suddenly you get this halo affect. I've worked with grandparents, parents, their kids. I've been in all sorts of activities with all of these various generations. I've had a good relationship with all those people. They've appreciated having me work with their youngsters, and I've appreciated the youngsters they've sent me to work with. I think this more than anything else. I guess we've been successful with it, but to say it was successful just because it was me-- I think the way the situation evolved had as much to do with it as anything.

MILT DOUGHERTY: You're saying humility by not saying humility, I think.

FORREST BOND: Well, that's a question that is hard. I know they put that in there, and I can understand the reasoning for putting it in there. I could say well, it's because I had such wonderful success with all the kids and everybody, and they went on

to do wonderful things and all that sort of bit. Some of that would be true, but it would be a little bit out of character with me to go ahead and start talking like that.

MILT DOUGHERTY: How do you see teaching has changed from what you've gone through up until today, now that you've been out a few years?

FORREST BOND: Some degree, and this has been going on for a few years now. I've seen three or four things happen. I alluded to one of them awhile ago. I think teachers have to maintain a status with youngsters in the classroom. They have to have enough respect for the job to look like they're doing something worthwhile. They have to enjoy the youngsters, but at the same time, to totally be in charge of the situation. And this includes youngsters who are difficult to work with. One thing I've seen happening is that we are going on special programs, you know that, so if we have problems come up that we used to solve in the classroom, now we dump them off on somebody else. And I think my own feelings are that it's hurting teachers from the standpoint that they always have in the back of their minds that if this

problem gets too difficult for me I can always recommend or write them up or refer them to some place else, and somebody else will solve that problem for me. I don't think that's been good. Now, I'm not knocking those things that some of these special areas--special education areas--do; I have no problems with that. I don't think it ought to be a catchall to solve all the problems.

MILT DOUGHERTY: We talked earlier a little bit about curriculum. What do you think is the proper curriculum? What is the right curriculum we should have?

FORREST BOND: I'm a basics man, and I think if they don't get some language arts--period--and I'm not a believer in this business of let them write and be creative and don't worry about if you can read it or not; this doesn't suit me very well at all. I think they have to have the math skills, and goodness knows they must have the reading skills. Those things need to be worked on and sometimes by putting other areas and other programs that would be nice for them to have; and I would add at this time, we're doing a woefully weak job of that. Now, history is fine; that will take care



of itself. I don't see it as being a real problem as such, but the kids don't know where anything is, geographically, and we're living in a world where that's unfortunate. But when they can't express themselves, when they can't read with comprehension as well as they should, and they can't keep up with this mathematical world they are in, I think that by adding all these other things, the frills and the edges, etc., are not very wise in terms of the time, and the money they siphon off. I will add one thing. I am a believer in some physical education, particularly in the health conscious age, and they certainly need to have that.

MILT DOUGHERTY: What do you think of standardized testing and the new movement in Kansas--the outcome-based program that will use tests to accredit schools or that kind of thing?

FORREST BOND: First of all, the standardized testing, if it's used properly, there's nothing wrong with it. That is, it can point out some areas that you need work on. Now, if it's supposed to be the final answer to everything, of course, it isn't, in any way, shape, or form. Just like in my own grading systems, I see people setting up

their own grading programs on a computer. They take and have so many points, etc., and it winds up leaving any judgments totally the teacher may have on how the youngster is doing, in addition to what they may show on that test. I'm totally opposed to that because if the teacher is worth his salt at all, he's got to have some concept of what the student's doing, over and beyond a test will show. But I think standardized tests are a useful tool used for that. Now, as far as that outcome-based education, I don't have much patience with that because that's just another program with a name that comes up that isn't anything new at all. It may be something we got away from, but there was a time when you got your work done and you made your grades and you passed. And if you didn't pass, you tried to finish it up the next year to see if you couldn't pass it.

MILT DOUGHERTY: What do you think, both in and out of schools, is affecting the student's apathy in education?

FORREST BOND: That's a good question. I made a little speech one time at an athletic banquet. I was coaching the junior high athletics at that time,

and I made the statement that I still hold to, that I didn't have any of the problems that some of the high school people had, that I just didn't have. The three things were basically girls, booze, and cars. And I think as they get to the high school level, all three of these get in the way. And we don't want to get sexist in this thing. We could say boys, booze, and cars. We've got to get both groups in there. All these outside activities, which so many of them have the ability to go jump in a vehicle--this wheels business--and go anywhere in spite of all the hollering about tough times and all that bit, the enormous amount of discretionary spending money that most of them have, I think all of these things tend to take away from our school program and their attitude towards studying, should we say. The unfortunate thing is that the schools in general, and I'm using that old whitewash brush here and I'm probably overdoing it a bit, but I don't think they've done enough to stiffen the requirements in the school system itself to say that this must be done and make sure that it is done. I think we've had a tendency to dilute a little, to adapt to a situation

rather than to fight the situation which is creating this apathy, and so forth.

MILT DOUGHERTY: Leading into this question, what has the family breakdown done to affect education?

FORREST BOND: It's had an enormous influence on it.

An enormous influence. And back to the other one I should have mentioned, sure, I'll go along with the people that say television is causing a lot of this, but television gets a bum rap, sometimes, because some of the things they learn on television they should be learning at school, and of course, some of the things they see on television, they shouldn't be learning anywhere. But we'll go back now to what you said about the breakdown of the family. I want to get through this, so if I get a little philosophical, tell me. Youngsters need an anchor. They need something to hold on to. I don't care what they're doing; they can run the tether of the rope out as long as they want to, but that rope is for their benefit. And they would agree to this too, most of them. They need it tied to something so they've got something to hold on to. That used to be the home. The standards were set there. That was the place to come with

your problems. You understand what I'm talking about? That was the harbor. That's where they could go. Now as that home, as you might say, has come apart and the kids are something that the parents have, we use all sorts of agencies and these sorts of things to raise them--to rear them. That's basically what's happening with child care, with all this sort of thing, with the parents having to do as little as possible towards raising them, then suddenly the kids are out in never-never land in a sense. Now, they've always said that the churches should have a hand in it. Churches have become more situation-oriented all the time instead of staying solid and providing the rock, an unwavering thing. It isn't this today. It shouldn't be, as it is today, shifting over to something all the time to fit a situation for the next day. The best chance for that to have been taken care of would have been the schools and the schools talking about similar responsibilities for the parents. But nobody draws the line like they should, I don't think. I said I wasn't going to brag, and I don't mean that, but when my youngsters came into the classroom, even from a lower classroom,

when we get into Mr. Bond's room that won't be happening--that's stability. That's something they can count on. This is much broader than that sort of thing is, but there's got to be some things that are right and wrong and some things you do and don't do, and if you do them, there's a result of all this. This is suddenly disappearing. It's like wading through a bunch of wet sand, you know, just squishy, squashy everywhere. This has an enormous impact on youngsters.

MILT DOUGHERTY: I think the family breakdown is a cause of all this. Let's talk a little about the result. How are students different today and is the change good or bad?

FORREST BOND: One of the changes in the students, of course, and this might surprise you a little bit, is that they're searching for some of the things they've lost because they're not at home anymore. I think that we have too many youngsters with no place to go. Home was always the place in my time. You went home. When you got through at school, you did that. Youngsters don't go home anymore for two reasons, three maybe; one of them is there isn't a home. There's nobody to go to, and it's

a place that oftentimes is disagreeable and they just don't like to be there. So, suddenly they're out roaming, they're driving around, they're having all those wonderful opportunities to get into trouble or get into activities that are detrimental to the school program. They get more opportunities to get involved with the drinking and all the activities that go on, and it's unfortunate in that sense, I think. Then when you get them into the classroom and people decide they need to have order in the classroom, they're not used to discipline and they react maybe negatively to it a bit. I'm going to put a question in here if I may. I don't know how in the world, and you can tell that this discipline thing bothers me, or the lack thereof, but how do we ever expect children to develop a self-discipline if they never see a disciplined atmosphere?

MILT DOUGHERTY: So you see discipline because of the home or lack of home as a major change?

FORREST BOND: I don't think there's any question about it. Did you ever hear a youngster call home and want to do something that evening and hear the language and the manner in which they talk to

their parents? And we can add one more thing-- respect. Youngsters don't respect anything anymore. That's too broad a statement. I don't want to say that. There are too many things that were a framework for society. There aren't too many things that separate us from animals anyway, from the rest of the animal kingdom. But respect for other people and the respect for authority, respect for parents, etc., boy, has this ever become unpopular.

MILT DOUGHERTY: I assume these things are bad.

FORREST BOND: They are bad.

MILT DOUGHERTY: Have you seen positive changes?

FORREST BOND: The access to information and for many youngsters who are capable and willing, etc., this has worked out very well. They have become very knowledgeable and some of them do very well, but knowledge can be very dangerous. Back to self-discipline again, if it doesn't have someone in control of it and knows proper ways to fit it into a decent society, it can be very dangerous.

MILT DOUGHERTY: You were talking about activities awhile ago, and this is a different type of activity, but what place do you feel extracurricular activities have in school?



FORREST BOND: I think it's great for schools to promote school spirit. Now understand, my experiences have all been in smaller systems. It's great for a school family. We'll get family back in here again. There's a value in school spirit. In fact, school spirit can be a motivator in many areas. It can even be in the scholastic areas and that sort of thing. So, I'm very much in favor of the extracurricular activities, except that it does create a problem in smaller schools when you have so few people doing it all. Is that a fair answer?

MILT DOUGHERTY: That's fine. Let's move to a little different area. Do you feel teacher training is more professional today than it was in your day?

FORREST BOND: I think they do one thing better than they did in my day; I'll give them that. There is much more time put in on on-the-job training, the practice teaching bit. They're allocating more time for that. The young teacher goes out and works with somebody. I had six weeks, and I went into a high school history class in Ottawa. The history teacher stayed there for the first day and then left and I was on my own. Now that's a hard way to learn to teach, especially when working

with high school seniors, so I think that's a plus. I can remember when I was being taught; there were many more practical things put into my training. Some of the things we've been talking about--how do you start a classroom, how do you start the day, what do you do in the community, what's your responsibility in the community and all? I don't see these things. Maybe I've been away from it too long, but I don't see these things. I see much more theory and these things, but not the old down-to-earth things. Boy, when you get out there, you can read all the books you want, but this is not what's going to make it happen. Maybe that's what they expect in the semester of practice teaching, to take care of that. That's possible.

MILT DOUGHERTY: Listening to you a little bit, you scared me a little bit about teaching. Do you think we are scaring teachers out of the profession?

FORREST BOND: I think the stories of what happens and particularly the big school systems and inner schools and teachers will tell stories where other teachers will never go down the hallways by themselves. They have armed guards in the hallways. Why wouldn't that scare people out of teaching? What bothers