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Comment and Comparison: Interviews with Two Master Teachers

Jeffrey Thane Frazier

Fort Hays State University School of Education

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Recommended Citation

Frazier, Jeffrey Thane, "Comment and Comparison: Interviews with Two Master Teachers" (1987). *College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories*. 222.

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COMMENT AND COMPARISON:

INTERVIEWS WITH
TWO MASTER TEACHERS

FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

1987

JEFFREY THANE FRAZIER

B. A. -- MCPHERSON COLLEGE

CHAPTER II

TRANSCRIPT

J.T.F.: I just want to open up a little bit, with, just to get you talking a little bit, to talk about your early days, and just background information on you.

Jackie: Well, I'm Jackie Engel, I was born Jackie Ulrich, and I'm from old pioneer stock of McPherson. My grandparents had the first cafe on main street, my grandfather came here with an old buckboard, and was the first mail carrier. So when you talk about old-time McPhersonites, that's my family. My grandfather started the first baseball team here, and things like that, so I had all my schooling in McPherson. All of it. And my father, then, married my mother, naturally; and came here with a vaudeville show, and a... tent show at that time, saw my mother sitting on the front row, and fell instantly in love with her, and decided to whisk her instantly off to New York; and that was not to my mother's parents liking at all. So, since dad couldn't take her to New York, he brought New York to McPherson, and he started the Crossroad Playmaker's Theatre. They had a very active theatre group for years, and years, and years; and they were very successful at everything except making money, and that was pretty much the story of my father's life. He was successful at everything except making money. So, dad decided he needed to do something to make a little money, so he became editor of the local paper, which was the Republican at that time. So, we're talking about... My stock goes back in McPherson a long time. So I got all my schooling here, was brought up in an old Victorian house on Walnut Street, one of those three stories where the spinster aunt and the two sets of grandparents, and everybody comes and lives with you, because there aren't nursing homes and things as far back as I go. So, I was a very well-loved child and I was a very happy child. I loved school. I can still remember skipping off to grade school, loving to go, liked high school, was very active; just wouldn't take anything for my happy childhood memories. My mother always said, "Jackie, I really... I think you're too dumb to be unhappy." Maybe there was some truth in that, but I've always been happy. I've always been optimistic. The only time I left McPherson was when I went to Principia, which is a college in Illinois. I was there for two years, it was a junior college then. Then came back, married,

during the war years, had a child, was a mother and a home-body for a while, and after that we moved to California for a brief six years. So that time was about the only time I've been out of McPherson. Came back, I was widowed very early. I was widowed when I was just thirty-one, and so, came back so that my mother could sort of take care of my child while I became an executive secretary with an aluminum company here in McPherson. And when it was time for my child -- my only child -- to go away to college, I decided I was going to be very, very lonely without young people; and that somehow being a secretary the rest of my life didn't sound all that appealing. One day I remember I was buying lettuce in the Dillon's Supermarket here, and I ran into Vinnie Lindbeck, who was the county superintendent of schools, and she said, "Jackie, why don't you try teaching? I think you'd like it, and I think it would like you." And I had never thought of teaching, never even thought of teaching, and I said, "Well, how do I start? I don't know whether I want to do this or not." And she said, "Well, go out, they're going to give the..." I don't remember... "English proficiency test at McPherson College, in a few days. Go out and talk to Dr. Harley Stump." So I went out and I thought, "Well, I'll take it, and if I even pass it, that'll be an indication that that's what God must want me to do." Well, I passed it, and didn't have any trouble with it, and Dr. Stump encouraged me to go on, and so that's how I got into education. And I was forty-two years old when I taught my first class, and after I graduated from McPherson College, working part-time, getting my teaching certificate there, I taught at McPherson Junior High my first year, and then the next twenty years I was here at McPherson High School. Never intending to be a Journalism teacher. I was ready to teach Chaucer, and Shakespeare, and all those other good things, but they lost their Journalism teacher here at the high school my second year of teaching, so they moved me over from the junior high. And I said, "But, I don't have any Journalism hours. I don't know anything about teaching Journalism." They said, "Oh, your father was editor of the paper." And I said, "Well, do you think it comes through the genes, or something? I don't understand that kind of perverted logic!" But, I went to school at K.U. that summer, and the next summer, and finally managed to get fifteen hours, which was more than what was required at that time, and I've been involved in English and Journalism at the high school here ever since. But, I was really a late bloomer, because I didn't even start teaching until I was forty-two.

Harry: You want it verbatim, as usual. Like your father always says, I was born at a very early age. That's all I remember so far. No, I was born on the eastern edge of

Colorado, almost into Kansas, in a little hick town called Towner. And it was way back there... I grew up during the Depression, and at that place it was the dust bowl; where you intercepted the dust from Texas to Nebraska and backwards. I think you would classify my folks as poor; until the change came, and they got out of the Depression. I enjoyed my childhood, and when I went to high school. I didn't have to resort to dragging main for boredom. There wasn't a whole lot to do. I think in my case, we were pretty much family centered. When I was about... I was in the third grade when we moved to McPherson, Kansas, and I have had most of my schooling here, except for my earliest. I went to McPherson College after service, and I have been to ten more different colleges. I have my Masters from Washington University, St. Louis.

J.T.F.: Who most influenced your decision to go into teaching?

Jackie: Well, it was just a spur of the moment thing, and I don't usually do things spur of the moment. I would say that it was Vinnie Lindbeck, and then I would say it was Dr. Stump, who really encouraged me -- and after I sat through a couple of his literature classes, I was just so inspired by what you could get out of literature. He just made me really love it; and I knew that was what I wanted to teach. And then after I took a few courses at K.U. and K-State in journalism, I knew that that was an exciting world out there too. So, I think I'd credit those people.

Harry: Well, I'd say it was basically my high school teachers, and I'd say grade school teachers. I don't think I probably knew at the time about the financial aspects of it. The coaches and teachers I had seemed to enjoy life, and athletics I think was fun, and I'd say they were the main influence. I would say that at the time I did go out [into teaching] my field was closed. And so I thought I'd temporarily be a teacher. If you ever get in, you can't get out, Fraz!

J.T.F.: By your field being closed -- what field was that?

Harry: I was a chemistry major. I have taught chemistry one year only; I've always taught math.

J.T.F.: You started out with the idea of being a chemistry teacher?

Harry: No, being a chemist. The only openings there were would be, what you would call, kind of writing things over and over again. I did take a minor in education.

J.T.F.: And you can't think of any one or two people in particular that might have most influenced...?

Harry: Two of them would be a gentleman by the name of Joseph Rich, Joe Rich, who you knew; and Jack Randle.

J.T.F.: What about them...?

Harry: Well, they were my coaches in high school, Mr. Randle was my Government teacher, and to this day I have a good association with him. I think he's a perfect gentleman. He called everyone Mr. and Miss., and he had a lot of respect for kids.

J.T.F.: Now, one of the first things they ask you, when you're applying for a job, one of the early things that's on the form is: what is your philosophy of teaching? And, I'm going to ask you the same thing, and maybe you'd like to even define what you consider to be a philosophy of teaching.

Jackie: I guess I've been asked that a lot of times. I guess I think a philosophy of teaching is something you can wake up with in the morning, live with through the day, and go to bed with at night and feel like it's been a good day. I would say my philosophy of teaching stems from the fact that I had two excellent supervising teachers when I did my practice teaching at the high school. I had Helen Matson who was an excellent high school teacher, English teacher. And I had Alma Maddox at the junior high, both very well-respected teachers. They were master teachers -- in every sense of the word. They taught me so much. I perhaps gained even more than I might have normally, because right after I started teaching at the high school, Helen Matson became very ill and it was necessary for me to assume the responsibility for the classroom and only because I was practically an "old lady" at that time in my fortys were they able to allow me to do that. If I had been, you know, in my early twenties I don't know that they would have. So I got a lot out of my teaching. And I think my philosophy stems from a lot of things they taught me. And one thing they taught me was that you must learn to teach from your heart as well as your head. And I've really tried to practice that. I was a mother before I was a teacher, and every time there's any discipline or any tough decision to make, I try to think "If that were my son or my daughter, how would I want that teacher to handle it?" and then I've tried to react accordingly. That's part of my philosophy of teaching. Another part of my philosophy of teaching is that I think the average student -- and that's what I think most teachers, unless they specialize, need to gear themselves to

teach, is the average student -- I think the average student will only reach as high as you put the bait. Now you once in a while draw that student who has that insatiable desire to learn, and I'm not talking about that student -- I'm talking about Mr. Average, and just as high as you put the bait is as high as they're going to reach. Now, to me in my philosophy the trick is: sometimes you put the bait too high, and you thwart them and frustrate them, sometimes you don't put it high enough and you don't motivate them enough. Well, to me being a good teacher is finding the level at which to put the bait.

J.T.F.: Do you think that mostly comes from instinct, or does that come from experience?

Jackie: Oh, I think a lot of it comes from experience. But I think the really good teachers that I've known have had an instinct...a sensitivity.

Harry: Well, I don't know what my philosophy of teaching is. I don't think there's anything permanent except change. Your philosophy I'm sure is going to change as time changes and you respond to children, or your students differently. I have about...twelve little quotes, and they deal with attitude, and what you want out of life, and what you're willing to do, and what knowledge consists of, what do you expect from school, responsibility, whether you can somehow grasp some creativity in a field, some knowledge in that field, creativity basically is probably an innate property that you have, but I think my philosophy would be that you would try to teach a student... impart to them knowledge; also good citizenship, responsibility, and probably efficiency. In the field I teach it used to be they'd say "he deserves a grade, he's worked hard, he works long, -- he does it." In the field of mathematics, basically the quickest, easiest way should be what you're looking for. Philosophy, I don't know what... I think it...you try to develop attitudes.

J.T.F.: Now, could you give me a couple of examples of some of the quotes? I know you write these up on the board almost on a daily...[basis].

Harry: I do write them on a daily... I imagine I have around three thousand of them.

J.T.F.: Any of them come to mind?

Harry: Oh, I think one of the ones I like ... "It's not having what you want, but wanting what you have"; "Are you part of the problem, or are you part of the answer?"; "Worry

is like a rocking chair, it won't get you any place, but it gives you something to do.". I have lots of those... and a lot of them... experience is a great thing... I have four or five about experience.

J.T.F.: Would you say that to some extent those quotes sort of reflect this philosophy?

Harry: It reflects my philosophy. I learned this by going to a teacher's meeting, way back in about '56. And the gentleman said write a quote every day on the board ...don't say anything about it. I started that the next year, I have been doing it since, and you'd be surprised as the students walk in, the first thing they do is look at the board. Today I put on "Don't count the days, make the days count." Now, see, we're down to -- what-- four days. You know, you could fold your tent and go home.

J.T.F.: What sort of responses do you get from the students? Do they ever discuss any of these?

Harry: Oh, yes! And every so often they go up and change them, and sometimes there's a new good one, because they paraphrase them...[tries to recall one, but can't] ...they change them so that it makes some good sense, and sometimes it says something to you. I can remember once I had one... "before you let your temper flare up, count ten -- count ten of your own faults." And if you lose your temper once in a while, they'll ask you about that motto. So don't do what I -- what? -- do, do what I say! I do have a lot of philosophy quotes, and some of them are real down to earth. And that is my philosophy. I think you have to sell kids, that's the philosophy. I think you have to sell them ethics -- what's right, responsibility. There's a lot besides just book knowledge. And I think the public expects us to do that now.

J.T.F.: How would you say that teaching, or education as a whole, has changed since you started teaching?

Jackie: Vastly. And you're talking about education more than how the students have changed -- you're talking about education. First of all, I think teachers have to become professionals -- in the sense of the word affiliations with your national, state and local organizations. And I bucked that all the way until I couldn't buck it any longer. I love teaching. I wanted to be left alone to do research, to plan my lessons, and I didn't want to be high-tailin' it to all kinds of meetings, and serving on all kinds of boards, and be president, and everything else. So the first six years, no matter what they asked me to do, I said no. No, I

wouldn't do it. And then I finally realized that if there weren't people out there working for teacher's rights and for teacher's grievances and things like that, that some day when I might need that, it wasn't going to be there for me -- I didn't have the right to expect it. So probably the sixth year that I started teaching I became extremely active. I have seen professional organizations stub their toes many times, our professional organizations, make a lot of mistakes, but I've seen them do far more good. So I see us as being much more... Teachers never used to be able to be active, politically active. They -- it was unheard of for them to take a stand. I'd say the thing I haven't liked about it with our -- as some superintendents call them -- unions, and I don't like to think of us that way, because that has a very negative connotation to me; and it shouldn't, because some unions do a lot of good. But with teachers, and our national associations, I'm sorry that we ever had that dichotomy between the administrators and the teachers that we have now. I hated that when it happened -- I hate it more now. And I think that rift has not been good. I think negotiations are good. I wish we didn't have binding arbitration, and I think until we get rid of that we're not going to flourish like we should. So I have seen teachers have to become more active; and I think the really good teachers do in their local, state and national. I think we're forced to.

J.T.F.: Now, when would you say that rift started, and what do you think was the cause of that rift?

Jackie: It started around '68 and '69, because that was the year I served as president of our local teacher's association. And I don't know whether it was that year or the year after that, that the administrators stopped joining the local associations -- the MTA: McPherson Teacher's Association. It might have been closer to 1970, but it was right in that ball park. I think there were too many differences of opinion, and they just simply couldn't work them out; and so they decided that because there were so many differences they'd pull out -- they weren't comfortable. I think it started a lot too when teachers first began to go to the negotiating table. But I think administrators have to remember that we were invited to that negotiating table. We were told that there's not enough dollars out there in the community -- you become active and help us find those dollars, if you're going to want higher salaries and things.

J.T.F.: But perhaps in the early days the teachers were kind of, perhaps flexing their muscles a little bit, and

because they had been given this opportunity, and the administrators perhaps couldn't cope with that?

Jackie: I think that's true, and I think I can have some empathy toward the administrators on that. I'm sure it must have been a terribly new ball game for them, too; and they could have been uncomfortable with it. And I think I understand that. But we can't go back. Teachers are going to become more and more active. I think it annoys principals when people become very, very professional and have to take days out of school to go to attend meetings and things like that. And in part I can understand that, but that's just part...that's how teaching has changed today. That and I think now, after A Nation at Risk and all that, we're standing at the threshold of better teacher preparation at college level. And teachers are going to have to become active in that ball game. They're going to have to become active in saying what makes a good teacher, and in serving on boards and things for it. We're going to see some big changes there.

J.T.F.: Aside from the professionalism of the teacher's organizations themselves, has the training become much more professional as well?

Jackie: Yes, and I think we're going to see it become more and more and more so. I think we're going to be able to do away with that two year period, where after two years you had your license to teach for the rest of your life. I've never felt that was healthy. I don't know of another profession where after you've been in it two years you can simply stay in it the rest of your life if you're average, excellent, or poor. And I don't think that's a healthy situation for the teachers, and I'm glad to see it go. And my friends that are young say "Well, that's easy enough for you to say. You've got security!" And I understand why they feel that way, but I just don't feel it's good, Jeff.

J.T.F.: You feel that in the end it'll be a greater impetus to be a better teacher?

Jackie: I hope so! To be an excellent teacher. I think we have far too many average, and eight to four, mediocre teachers. And that doesn't mean that I think you have to spend a lot of hours. I have to, because that's just the way I'm geared; but I don't think it's the number of hours you spend. I think it's what you do in the hours you're here.

Harry: We live in a faster society, our life's pace is a lot faster. I don't think that's probably good. We don't

take the time to smell the roses, or something like that. I think we need to. I think there's more distractions, more diversions in education than it's ever had. I think sometimes our family unit isn't strong and so there's no pressure on somebody, and we are becoming some kind of a state that says "we'll take care of you". That's true...we need to...those who need to be taken care of, but I don't think you can ride a gravy train, either.

J.T.F.: Now, by distractions, do you mean extracurricular activities, or do you mean things like jobs and...?

Harry: Yeah, I mean basically jobs. Jobs is probably the worst thing that ever happened to the high school kid. Now, we've always had jobs, but we have many attractions like cars, good times, going to see costly concerts, and the parent says to the child, "Sure you can do that -- you pay for them." And pretty soon, you've got a job, forty hours a week, he's got married to a car, he supports the car, buys gas, does all this, and if there's a conflict between school and his job, his job is immediate money. Right now. He's going to slight the school. Where I guess the philosophy of the school would be: why do you go to school? To learn responsibility and that, and then twenty years down the line, it's money for you. It's kind of delayed action money, and right now we look at it and we want to get our hands on it. I'm not against kids working, but when it takes away their school time, and what they can learn...and attractions besides, after they do get through with their jobs, even dragging main street with your car, see? Where it's an ego trip sometimes. Rather than go home and get... bury your nose in the book, and kids need to realize one thing: if you start working when you're fourteen, fifteen years old, you're going to work a long time in your life.

J.T.F.: Would you say that compared to, say, ten or even twenty years ago that the kids are working considerably longer hours? It used to be that you thought of kids in high school getting summer jobs, and now you're saying that rather than waiting until the summer to get that job, they're trying to get more or less full-time jobs during the school year as well?

Harry: It probably helps that the company will cut them off from having forty hours, because they don't want to give them the fringe benefits. But you go out and look in our parking lot, and you can tell the student's cars from the faculty cars.

J.T.F.: Are the student's cars better?

Harry: Oh! You know it!

J.T.F.: Lot better shape.

Harry: They do have pride in their cars. That is one thing that is probably good about that job and that. They have some pride in that job and they do learn some responsibility. But, they may not learn enough knowledge and know-how to save them if there was a recession or something like that, or if they want a better job, because the qualities that they need or qualifications won't be there.

J.T.F.: How would you describe your style of teaching? And before you answer that, I'm going to warn you that the next question a little bit further down is going to be talking about method; and by style I think I'm speaking mostly in terms of presentation -- the way that you present your material to the students as opposed to the method, which is organization, the preparation that you do yourself. So how would you describe the style of teaching?

Jackie: I guess in two words: highly organized. I'm not creative, I'm not artistic, I'm not gifted. Everything all my life has been extremely hard for me. It was hard for me to learn to play the piano, ride a bike, anything I've ever done has been hard for me. I was an A student only because if somebody else spent fifteen minutes, I spent six hours. And that's the way I... I guess that just goes with the genes I was born with. So I've always had to organize, that's been... if I've been successful it's only because I'm a highly organized person. And to this day even though I've taught MacBeth for twenty-one years now, I never go into a class session without re-reading that same scene, going over my same notes, revising my notes, and I have usually everything written down from the announcements I'm going to make to the students I have to see to remind them of something, to the time when the study period begins if I'm going to give them one. It's the only way I'm comfortable in a classroom. I wish I were a loose, casual, sit on the edge of my desk, "hey, let's play it by ear today." Oh, I admire those teachers, but I'm just not that way. And I can't operate that way. My very first day of teaching in junior high, I tell you, I crossed all the t's and dotted all the i's and I told Verne Young that I had a new dress and a new wristwatch and I was so ready to teach that first class and I gave my first beautiful fifteen minute lecture on the need for preparation and the need to bring the right book to class, and let's not waste one precious minute of those, I think it was forty-three minutes we had at that time, and boy, my first lecture went so well, and then I heard the intercom click on and I heard Mr. Young's voice

say, "Your mother just called, and she said that you were so excited to get to your first day of teaching that you forgot your lunch. It's here in the office for you." Well, that blew my credibility. So I wasn't too well organized then. I've always remembered that first day. No, I just have to be organized, and that's my style. It's a disciplined, organized style. It's the reason I think I have the best of all possible worlds, because I teach college-bound English, so that's the way I teach that class. I teach Journalism I and II, which is the basics, but it's a class similar to that -- it's organized. Then I have two hours that are lab classes, so I can relax. I'm not sure I could be that highly organized for five straight periods. So in those lab classes, I still have notes, and I still for the first five or six minutes say "hey, this is what needs to be accomplished", but then I can sit back and watch them do it. And that's a nice change of pace for me.

J.T.F.: And during those periods you have a lot more interaction then...?

Jackie: Oh, yes.

J.T.F.: Okay, now how about your method, and you've already touched upon that a little bit, but perhaps you might want to go into a little more detail about how you set yourself up for each class?

Jackie: Well, I try not to stand behind the desk. I try to somehow move in front of it. I'm uncomfortable with a lectern, or anything, although it would be much handier for me sometimes than having my notes down here. But I want to be closer to the students. I try from the very first or second day to know the students by first name. I try to call them by their first name. I try to get interaction among them. I try very hard to go to every activity that any of our students are involved in, so that when they come into class that day, I can say "gee, that was a nice concert last night", or "that was a fine solo you did", or "I saw you marching in the band yesterday", and that's something that I guess maybe I do pride myself on, but it makes for very long days sometimes. But I really try to be able to reach the student on a one-on-one basis -- when he's at all reachable. Now, the uninvolved student, the student who just goes to work after school or early in the morning, that's a little harder nut to crack, and there you have to find out where they work and approach them on it. So after we can sort of get some of those amenities out of the way early in the hour, then I really try to be close to them, up front. I lecture a lot. I expect them to be able to take notes, but that's because of the nature of my class. But

then I want interaction from them because, in literature particularly, there can be a lot of interaction. I try to wait sufficient time for a response. I try to draw from those students who aren't as apt to respond. If that's what you mean by method.

Harry: If you go to each room in this building, you'll find every teacher's different. We used to team teach down in our area, and I think it was probably great, because they got a little of two teachers that were completely different style. So, I'm different from anybody else. I can't mimic anybody. I've learned over the years, I think you have to develop a rapport with each class. With each level and that. We teach high school students. They're coming out of junior high, and they're starting to mature and that, they're adolescent; and you have to reach their level. And so the first thing I would look at that I do... I work very hard at being able to communicate with them at their level. I use probably more slangs, or colloquialisms, than probably any teacher in this school. I have quite a few words that I use like, maybe you've heard, like boo-coo, yardbird, knucklehead; and I will sometimes call a...stop and call a kid a knucklehead. I can use different inflections, so I think the student can understand if I'm pleased or displeased with him. I... that's the way I want to teach. I don't usually know my student's first name, I call them all by their last. I have some crazy posters, bulletin boards in my room. All teachers have different bulletin boards. I think that's a way to reach kids. I spend a lot of time preparing lessons. If I'm going to be in this, I have to work at it. And I think our school is very fortunate; we have a lot of students -- I mean teachers-- that do spend time. We have coaches where the classes come first. And I think academics do come before that. Now, my style of teaching, I look at it and I always do try to relate it to everyday life. You can't always do that. I probably water it down, make it easy, because we're "a nation at risk". Maybe thirty years ago you would teach to the B, C students in your elective; we still teach to our C students. We'd like to hold these students, make them think, "I got something out of this class." He can't sit in class and not learn anything. Whether they get the good grades out of it, we hope they like the idea that they were in the classroom, learning something about this area; whether you like this area. My colleague and I, we break it down into... we do grade papers, and we have a little different philosophy about tests. We have a test every Friday. We grade papers every day, and spend about twenty minutes so if they don't know how to do it, you better learn it here -- because on Friday it's going to be on that test, then we're going to find out if the student knows it. And we use tests as a

learning as well as a measuring instrument. After we have graded, we to take up the next lesson. We're basically a lecture...we do ask questions all throughout. And we cover this lesson. Now, in the assignment, that would be the next third of the hour, probably the last twenty minutes, or fifteen, we have... we probably do it a little differently, we do have the assignment over the lesson we've gone, and that would be probably a third of the assignment will be over the lesson that's been presented, but we'll spiral back for five days. In other words the problems they get on this day, they will see them four more days, and they will decrease in number. So I think we have better results if we have the test at the end, because then they will have had it. We just don't give them the problems, and then leave them. And we call that spiralling way. And we give them enough so they can't finish in class, and they should have from ten minutes to an hour homework, depending on the ability of the student. We are basically a lecture type course, mathematics, not very much audience participation.

J.T.F.: Now, have changes that we discussed earlier in education, and we haven't yet talked about from a student standpoint what sort of changes have taken place, but from an educational and teacher standpoint, have the changes that have taken place in the past -- have they affected your style or your method to any great degree?

Jackie: I don't think so. Without saying that what has affected my teaching has been what's happened to the student in society, and the difference in the students I get today, which I think you'll get to later; so I'll put that on the back burner for now. No, I don't see myself and my methods... perhaps they haven't changed as much as they should. My expectations are still pretty much as they were. The methods that I use to get to them... I do try to brighten, freshen, and revise my material all the time. Even though it's still MacBeth, or it's still Chaucer, I'm still looking for that more relevant way to bring it in -- to make it real for them. But, outside of that, no, I don't think it's changed.

J.T.F.: Well, let's go ahead and touch on that burning question, in what way have the Kids changed?

Jackie: Vastly. Just enormously. The students that I had when I was first doing my student teaching at McPherson College, and was a grader -- we used to have graders at those times, and one of the English teachers in the high school would hire you to grade student's themes -- the students that I got to know through those themes, and then got to know my first five years of teaching, had such a

desire to want to learn. School was their number one job. It wasn't a job that was their number one job, and then school if they had time for it. And that's the biggest change. We didn't have almost seventy-one per cent of our students in high school working. And I'm talking about working twelve, to fifteen, to sometimes twenty-four hours a day. [week?] School was their job. They loved it. They had that desire to learn. Whereby I used to require twelve novels a year in college bound English, I have to fight every step of the way to get six in now. And I'm not proud of the fact that I've had to partially water down the college bound English course in order to make it reachable, and practical for those students who are still taking it.

J.T.F.: Wouldn't you say that -- I'm kind of leading the witness here, but -- wouldn't you say that when you started [teaching] that education was very much the key to success. Whereas now, people come out of... well, even without a high school degree... people seem, to my mind, to enjoy talking about the success stories of people without a college or high school... wouldn't you say that that has had an influence on the student's attitude?

Jackie: Oh, definitely, and I think one of the finest things that has happened to education has been the growth in the vocational areas, and what we've done with auto mechanics and vocational carpentry, and welding, and things like that, which have made great success stories and great working citizens in our community of people who don't want to go on to college. No, I'm not a believer at all that college is for everybody, but because of the nature of the course I teach, I gear my teaching toward that student who is going on. And when they say to me "but Mrs. Engel, we're not a freshman in college yet" I say to them "but you're much closer to that than you are to being a sophomore in high school." While we're talking about students changing, I don't want to sound like I'm finding fault with students. I think they've been caught in this. The seventy-one per cent working is one thing. Most of them are working for the car. A few will say "we're working for college", but not many. Also the student is caught in that, I feel, bad situation whereby they're either from a single-parent family -- I think we have almost thirty per cent that way -- or sometimes we're the first adults they see when they get to school in the morning. No longer do we have that cozy family thing of mom getting up and fixing breakfast, and a few even hurried words exchanged at the breakfast table. Sometimes the students don't see the mother or father all day, so there isn't that "what happened at school today, John" or "what's going on" and "what's giving you a bad time in physics" or whatever it is. We don't have that

interchange, that conversation going on at home. We don't have that parental backing of education that we had even fifteen years ago. And that worries me. I don't see that changing, and that worries me.

J.T.F.: You don't see the trend coming back just yet?

Jackie: I wish I could not say just yet, I don't see that it's going to come back. I think society is going to have to undergo a tremendous change before we see that happen.

Harry: Yes, and there's been a lot of years between there... it has changed. And I think probably somewhat ethics have changed. That sounds funny, but I think ethics do change. You have to roll with the punches. And if you can't change, then you'd better get out. If you don't like kids, you'd better get out. And I think that one of the things that's hurt us is the family unit. The family unit, say, thirty or forty years ago still existed. We have quite a few where the family unit doesn't even exist. Someone's got to care about kids; and that sometimes comes down to the teacher, or the school employee, coach, custodian -- which, in our school, I think our custodian probably is an important person to the kids, because he does care about them, and they know it. Kids know if you do. I think rapport is the most important thing, and over the years, that's going to change. And you may be out of step sometimes.

J.T.F.: In what ways have you had to change in order to adapt to the, at least partial, breakdown of the family unit? Of course in some cases like you said...

Harry: Well, you're going to have to first of all respect the rights of others. Regardless of how you feel towards it, you've got to feel ... that they have their opinion. You can disagree with someone and still be their friend and teacher. You do have to change. And technology has changed, but basically our course is still the same. Ours isn't as tough as social studies, where you have to teach people how to live, and I do think that in math we don't teach people... we don't teach much more than what's in the book sometimes. And I think you still need to teach kids a little about life, what's important. We... maybe our subject isn't the most important, responsibility may be; respect for others, respect for yourself. There's something that's probably... when a kid's having trouble, sometimes he has no respect for himself. And we do not see the environment these kids are in. A few I know are a credit to their parents. And I still think, regardless of if it was thirty years ago or it is now, a kid has dignity. Don't

take that away from him. How do you change? My course probably hasn't changed as much as others. I think English may have changed, and yet it hasn't, because you've still got to be able to communicate and express yourself. We probably do have more colloquialisms and things, and how has the nation, or the society in general, reacted to that? They go with it. So, I don't know. I would say I have a harder time getting down to kid's level than I...the attention span. I think...sometimes I say things that I don't mean, but I think TV has something to do with the attention span. I notice with my own children, they're pretty good at shutting me out when they were watching TV. Now, that's a carry over sometimes to the classroom. Kids can shut you out very easy. So maybe you have to be a entertainer. You have to do something to get their attention. I think we do work at that. I will tell you that I try to do different things, and work kids in, to get their attention. Whether I've got to look at a kid who's a basketball player and call him "Mr. Basketball", so he knows that I know who he is, I know what his interest is, and then I may have his attention. I think you've got to let the kids know that you're interested in what they do otherwise. If their name's in the paper -- even if it's speeding or something. I think sometimes you've got to handle it very carefully.

J.T.F.: How has discipline changed from the early days to now? Is it more difficult to maintain discipline now?

Jackie: I guess my age and my weight have not made that a problem for me. I know that you're probably not going to believe this, but I can truly say that I could probably count on two hands, in twenty-one years, discipline problems that I've had. I don't send students to the office. For myself, I don't believe in it. I do not say it's wrong, and I would not say that if I had been a teacher at twenty-one or twenty-two, closer to the student's age, that that might not have been a recourse I would have taken. I handle my own discipline problems if I have them, I just don't have very many. I think students coming into my class know I'm tough. And I think sometimes they think I pride myself on being tough, and that's really not true. But I do have high standards, and I don't want them to have get to college and apologize for their college bound English course, and what they had in English. And I'm going to be tough. And I am tough; and I'm not apologizing for that, either. But I just... I keep them so busy. I usually have twice as much planned in a class period. I don't let them have time to be idle. And if I do give them study time, I'm just a real

bear about the fact that they must be quiet. They can work on somebody else's subject, but they must not steal that time from the student next to them, who is not going to have the guts to stand up and say, "hey, be quiet -- I've got football practice after school. I gotta get this done while I can." Kids aren't going to do that to each other, and I know that, so I'm going to be the bad guy and do it. I'm going to say, "now be quiet, the person next to you may want to study. If you want to go get a magazine, or read today's newspaper, that's fine. I just don't want you to talk." And it is quiet in my classroom. And I don't have discipline problems.

J.T.F.: Well I know that, speaking from personal experience that, I think from day one you pretty well made it clear to the students that you meant business, and that this was going to be a time to really get something accomplished. Would you say that's probably an important part of... establishing that type of relationship between the... it was almost a boss/employee type relationship. Things were very clearly defined; and would you say that the more clearly defined that relationship is, the fewer problems you're going to have?

Jackie: Definitely. I think that from day one the teacher that can establish the expectations and the goals is going to have an easier time in the classroom, and I if I were going to start all over again, that's one thing I definitely would not change. I think that's very, very true and I... you're right, I do tell them from day one this is the way it is. I know that after that first day students go out of the room and say, "aw, she doesn't mean it, she's not going to be that tough." And they stay in and find out I am. There are a few others who head for the guidance office and check out, and that's fine. That's why I deliver that little lecture. Because as I said, I don't want them to have to apologize later on, and I tell them that they may think they spend a lot of time in there, but I spend three times as much. I'm organized and I'm prepared when I come in. I get their papers back to them on time, they don't have to wait for them, if I have to stay up til four in the morning. So I give a lot to my class and I expect a lot. That's just never been watered down.

Harry: Yes, I think discipline... I think the courts have made it very tough on schools. I think we have to keep kids regardless. I don't think that's completely right. I think school's a privilege, and a responsibility. You can't release a student or put him on suspension for more than three days, or then you've got to have a hearing. Hearings are all right, but I think sometimes the truth has to come

out in them. A student just can't be a professional student and not do anything. What I mean by a professional student is a student who comes to school as a social aspect, and not as a learning aspect. I think we have a lot more little things that are irritating. And a lot of little irritating things sometimes develop into big things. I think... once again, I think respect... we have to... how do you teach that? Peer pressure is becoming very hard, and that affects discipline. I think you must be very consistent with your discipline. And I think you must fit your punishment.

J.T.F.: You mentioned just a little while ago, about the... more or less the legal aspects of discipline. Do you think the students are aware of the legal implications of... well, like corporal punishment, and because they're aware of the difficulty that a teacher can be placed into, that they are not as -- for lack of a better word -- intimidated by a teacher, and less likely to fall in line because they know that certain types of discipline can... fire back on a teacher?

Harry: Yeah, I think the student is... sometimes we don't give them credit for being intelligent enough. A student is always going to try and get ahead of you, and you may have to sit up nights figuring out how to get ahead of them! And it becomes a cat and mouse game. I think students are very much aware of what a teacher can do, and what they can't do. And I think they sometimes feel like when they take and pick on other kids, some students really pick on teachers, try to back them into a corner. They're not so dumb. It is tough, and it's tough to get rid of a kid. Our laws are that way. And I don't know what you do about the kids that don't want to go to school; he's pretty hard to motivate, he's pretty hard to grab, and say what he is, and we have kids who enjoy making trouble. And I don't know what you do about them. If you've got them in class, I think you can make the analogy to a bad apple in a barrel. Pretty soon you're going to get two or three. And they may take the fringe person, and go their way. We have a lot of kids that all you have to do is get them in the right direction. And that's part of schooling, is let's get these kids and get them going in the right direction. Sooner or later, and that's the nice thing about kids, they do come back, they do realize and mature and that, and they come back and they do go the right direction, and they like to come tell you, "see, you didn't think I'd make it." That's called growing up.

J.T.F.: Do you feel that high school education should be more broad-based, or liberal arts type of setting, or should it be more college/career oriented? I'm trying to think of

a better way to phrase that, but... I guess liberal arts as opposed to college bound and career.

Jackie: I think I know what you're saying. I'm trying to think of the terminology too, because it's what we used when I was in high school. I would -- most of my colleagues don't agree with me -- I would like to see us go back to what I, for want of a better word, am going to call "tracks". When I was in high school, we either could go the vocational track, and it wasn't as nearly as exciting as it is now, we didn't have houses we could build, cars we could work on and things like that; or strictly college bound; or general, and the general was more broad-based. The difficulty, at that time, was in choosing between the general and the college bound. I really do believe high school time is the time to experiment. I'd like to see students doing more with history, and economics, and sociology, and humanities, and learning more about that whole world out there. But, if they really are in a family situation, or an economic situation, where they know that from day one out of school they're going to need to get a job and get to work, then to me it only makes sense that there are tracks for them to assume and take. And there are going to have to be some necessary things in every track, there is going to have to be English basics, and math basics, and all that; but beyond that, those electives they pick, should be organized for them accordingly. And that's what I think we need to get back to with education.

J.T.F.: Just to kind of rephrase this, you're saying that, well, that because of the situation being what it is for students now, that many of them are already working even as they're in high school, that simply insisting that they be exposed to a little bit of everything, although a good idea on paper, is not practical? That they need that kind of vocational, and specific, training to prepare them for the situation?

Jackie: Yes, I think that's very true; and I suppose part of my philosophy about that has to come from my more recent experience with the journalism schools, whereby they don't even want to look at you until you're a junior, as far as any specialized courses. They want you to get all those fine arts, to learn to be human, to learn to live in the world, to learn to know people, to know a little bit about a lot. And then come into the specialized courses. So they want you to do that your first two years of college. Some even into your third year. And I'm a firm believer in that, for the profession of journalism particularly. Now, there are some other areas. A little while ago we were talking about discipline, and you asked me about the change, and I

think I took you on a tangent of I don't have discipline problems to speak of. I didn't get back to the fact that I see a tremendous change in discipline with teachers today. Teachers used to be able to touch a child -- whether it was firmly or otherwise -- you just can't do those things with our laws today. You just cannot do it. One of the most well respected people that has ever gone out from teaching in this building was not above occasionally, they tell me, even using a bit of a chain; and that sounds a little frightening to me, but they did use it, and I don't know of a single person who's been more respected than that individual. So, you wouldn't think of doing that today. You cannot lay a hand on... you cannot be verbally abusive to students, there are laws to protect the student that never existed before. And you better learn those laws as a new teacher, or you're going to be in lots of lawsuits.

J.T.F.: The days of the dunce cap are over.

Jackie: You can't even... because that would be emotionally disturbing to the student, and you could be taken to court for that. You've humiliated this student in class. So I think young teachers, in a new ball game, have it a lot tougher than some of the rest of us.

Harry: Well, I think it's like all other things, I think you need a good balance of both of them. I see the liberal arts come through the elementary and middle schools, and somewhat through first two grades in high schools. And then I -- we see the juniors and seniors, through electives, specializing, where they go the vocational route or the college route. And I think colleges sometimes dictate that. We are preparing students for college, and the college has become very sophisticated, and sometimes we find ourselves teaching courses that thirty years ago they taught in college. And the colleges don't worry about it -- if you can't get it, and if your school doesn't happen to be large enough, or wealthy enough to give those, then we have some problems. Whether it's activities or subjects or that... but I think you need a balance of both. I don't think you can specialize without having some liberal arts. And if you have all liberal arts, you're probably not in a position where you have any skills. You have lots of knowledge -- a little bit about a lot of things. You need to know, sometimes, a lot of things just about one thing.

J.T.F.: Do you feel that here at McPherson High School, that they have a... they've struck a fairly good balance?

Harry: I think so. I think they worry about it a lot. It's called curriculum. And they're always working on it.

And each teacher may be selfish in their point of view about their own curriculum. I think they know probably more than anyone else, and I think it's up to the administration to blend this.

J.T.F.: Getting back to this broad-based versus specific education, would a trend in either direction greatly affect your teaching as it stands right now? Your style, or method or anything else?

Jackie: Probably if I were younger. I'm sixty-four. I'm really in the twilight of my career. You might ask me that question after I've taught at the University next year, in Reporting I, how will my style change. I don't know. Those kids that I'm going to have out there in front of me are going to have paid dearly for those hours to sit in those seats. They're not going to be there scot free. Whether I'm going to find that that makes them more eager to learn, or what, I don't know. I think, though, in a given similar situation in high school, Jeff, I probably wouldn't change, because I've liked what I've done, I guess I like the way I'm doing it, I've liked the feedback I get. I don't take very many popularity prizes in school, and that had to stop being necessary and important to me. It was important, particularly before I married fourteen years ago. It was awfully important to me that the kids feel free to drop by my apartment, any hour of the day or night. If they had a problem, I wanted them to come. That was terribly important to me at that given period in my life. It stopped being that important when I had another life, of course. It's still important, but I... the benefits that I can draw are the students that come back -- and I had a letter just the other day -- that say, "I didn't particularly like you, or the class, but I want to write now and thank you for it." And I get some of those every year, and that's where I have to reap my results.

Harry: Oh, I think we've had that trend, after Sputnik and that. We became very cognizant, and we're heading back in this in A Nation at Risk, and I think what we're going to find is that we're going to swing way over on something new, and then we're going to swing back. And then we're going to settle down, and we'll take the best of both. The new math was that. It was a very big digression from what the regular math had been, and now it's come back; and we take a little bit of both.

J.T.F.: Education is like other social entities in that it's subject to trends, and you feel that although it does swing back [and forth] you think eventually that, at least

for a time, it's going to kind of fall somewhere in the middle?

Harry: Yes. And if you're caught in that time before it settles, you may have some problems. But once it gets settled, it's usually pretty good until someone else decides it ought to be changed. One thing we do in education is it seems like we've always got to change, somebody's got to have some change to justify their job. And see, here I'm taking a poke at people, but we've had a three year high school, a four year high school, a three year high school, a four year high school -- about every twenty years we fluxuate back and forth. That's an example, but that's true in a lot of areas of school.

J.T.F.: Would you say that computer sciences are a pretty big trend right now?

Harry: It is. I think it's starting to swing back. For a while, everything was computer, and the people that sell computers had a good sales pitch, and they did a good selling job, a lot of computers were sold, legislatures got into it, in some states legislatures wanted a computer in every deal, then all of a sudden -- how do you adapt computers? A computer is not the answer itself, it's a tool, or a supplement. And we've got to look at it as that. I think that we're going to live in a new type era of technology, that you better know something about computers. An old man like me, no, I don't know anything about a computer. I'm going to wait until they start talking to you, and then you talk back with them and tell them what to do. I probably use a computer in my instruction as much as anyone in this school. I know how to turn the computer on and off, but my students have written programs.

J.T.F.: They used to talk about a teacher being a pitcher that would pour information into a student's head. Is that what teachers are doing? Or is the teacher's job, as far as you're concerned, to teach the student how to learn how to learn, and to enjoy learning in and of itself.

Jackie: I think the good teacher has to do more than dispense information and store it away, to pull it back for times of testing. I think that concept of teaching's gone out after the age of information went out and we've gotten more now into the age of technology and so forth. I went back to school at forty-two during the age of Sputnik, when, you know, the Russians have done this marvelous thing and now everything was science and we left all the fine arts and all the other things in the wake back here. Then we've gone through the age of information, and now the age of

technology. Whether we'll ever get back to the age of intellectuality, like we had years ago, I don't know. Uh, I got sidetracked -- what was your question about the...

J.T.F.: Well, just -- first of all I wanted to know what you felt was...

Jackie: All right, now I remember. I don't think you are going to last long in teaching if all you do is dispense information. But, I think as far as making them want to learn, I think you have to be the example. I think you have to be excited about your subject matter, and I don't care if you've taught it twenty-one years or five years, I think that excitement has to show. I think it has to spark from your eyes, I think it has to come from your voice, I think it has to come from the rapidity or lack of it with your words. I think you have to be on fire with the desire for them to learn what you know, and gosh, you've enjoyed knowing it, and you want to share it with them. And I think if you don't do that -- if you're a passive teacher -- and you just come to class with... well, here's another day to teach, then I don't think you should expect your students to learn, and I don't think they will.

J.T.F.: What do you think is the norm, as far as... we're talking now about the ideal. What do you think in the real world... do you think that most of them are the eight to four, merely trying to teach from their perspective rather than from the student's. In other words, I think there are teachers out there who gear their material, and their presentation, and their testing in such a way that it is most convenient for them, as opposed to whether or not it will instill that wonder, and desire to learn. Do you feel that in the real world, there are more teachers that are shooting for that ideal, or who are reverting back to merely pouring knowledge into a brain?

Jackie: I think I'd like to take the fifth amendment! I think if we even have one teacher who is an eight to four teacher, and gears what they teach in the classroom to their own lifestyle and what's easier for them, then it's one too many. But, that's idealistic. As far as whether we have more teachers that way, we have far too many. We also have some exceptionally fine teachers. And McPherson High School I think, is very fortunate to have some of them. And I think McPherson College -- I think we're fortunate to have a couple of colleges here with some very fine teachers. But that's why I think that A Nation at Risk was needed to wake us up -- to jar teachers. I think we need better preparation in colleges, I think it has to be less easy for teachers to get that precious degree. I don't think they

need that two year tenure. I think when we get rid of some of these bad things that have made it easy for teachers to just be teachers, to just be the shopkeeper in the classroom, and it's been too easy. I probably would have fallen into the same wake, maybe, if it had been that easy; but I think we need to make it tougher for the teacher.

Harry: I hope not. I think everything's a sales pitch. I think teachers have to be good salesmen, and I think any aspect of the school they have to be good salesmen. They've got to sell the kids, they've got to sell the parents, they've got to sell the public. This is the school system in general. Administration has to sell the public. I think the teachers and kids together have to sell the parents, and I consider myself probably more of a salesman than I do a teacher. I don't think you any more pour stuff in and have them regurgitate it is a method of teaching. And yet, sometimes that's the only way you can learn certain things. They have quite a few theories on learning now. Some of them are very good.

J.T.F.: Now, we've talked a little bit earlier -- you were mentioning about how, back in the early days, that you felt that students seemed more anxious to learn. I guess the question I'm wanting to ask now is: do you feel that, in the present day, do most high school students want to learn? And secondly, do most feel that high school is a beneficial thing to them?

Jackie: Do most?

J.T.F.: Yes, most.

Jackie: Not today, I don't think. Not today, I don't think most do. I probably am not the best person to answer that, because having college bound students, I naturally have more the cream of the crop. In journalism, the two publications classes I have, I have kids who have elected to be there -- not have been forced into it. So all I can base it on is that one class a day that I have where I get the kids that have been scheduled in there, out of necessity, because it's the lesser of several evils that they've been offered. I would like to tell you that everybody that comes into Journalism I or Journalism II is in there because they want to use it as a testing ground, to see if they'd like it to be on the school publication, and that's simply not true. I have those kids that are there simply because of a scheduling conflict, and those are the kids I'm basing it on when I say they're just there killing time. They're just there until the bell rings at three fifteen and they can get out to the job, or out to the football field, or someplace else.

J.T.F.: Now, how do you deal with those students?

Jackie: Not very well. As an experienced teacher, I should deal better. I should learn how to lower the bait better, and still keep it high enough that the six or eight students that I have over here are going to feel that excitement in journalism that I feel. And yet, I feel that I'm a better teacher since I've had those classes than I was when I had three hours of college bound, and then my two lab classes. I feel that I... That doesn't mean I feel I'm a better teacher in that hour where I teach Journalism I or II, but I feel I'm a more appreciative teacher of students that I have in my other classes. It doesn't help that I have that class the last hour of the day when, since I usually come to school at six in the morning, I perhaps have hit a lower ebb with spontaneity and things like that. How do I deal with it? Those are the classes where I give the C's and occasionally the D's, which I don't... rarely do I have to give those in my other classes. Rarely. I'd like to think that, because those students will go ahead and sign up lots of times, for one of the publications, that there has to be something being done that's right. But, I'm seeing fewer each year sign up for the publications, so that doesn't speak too well for it either. I'm really trying to be honest.

Harry: That's pretty tough. To answer the first one, yeah, I think kids want to learn. Most kids. The majority, a very substantial majority want to learn. Because kids always start out liking school. Now, there's some that probably don't want to learn, but something's turned them off, and sometimes it's confidence. Sometimes it's peer pressure, and sometimes... I don't know what it is. But, I think kids do want to learn. I still think that this is the old-age adage that yeah, way back, someone's setting on one end of the log to the other. Now, what was the second question?

J.T.F.: Well, do you feel like most high school students recognize high school education as something that's of value to them?

Harry: I don't think a high school education is as of value to them now, as it was forty, fifty years ago, because then we could be sure that a person who graduated from high school was responsible and all that. And some students have quit school before [graduating] still had the talent, that they were responsible, they had initiative, and could do things, and they did do things -- they became very successful. We're living in a different age. We're living in a technology age. I don't know if they realize how important

it is 'till they go out and they want a certain kind of job, and they don't have the background. This is true in our field, we have a lot of kids that want to be engineers, but they don't learn their mathematics and it's dear old dad forks over the money for one semester, then they're home or else they're on probation. I don't think some students fathom the importance of high school, but perhaps college is on the same level now as high school was fifty years ago, because we have a good percentage of students that go to colleges from all over and when we think of a college graduate we think that he has all the tools that he needs. We are finding out that the high school kid doesn't always fit -- why can't Johnny read -- employers complain about [how] they can't add or make change. Look at McDonald's and fast food restaurants -- you punch pictures for prices. They are computerized, and they are making up for the shortcomings of what students don't have knowledge of, and yet their education probably doesn't afford them a better job. We're going to probably see a lot more people in service industries and industries such as I just described where the wages won't be comparable to the one that has the knowledge.

J.T.F.: You think there is going to be a real gap, then between -- larger gap, than there is now, even, between say blue collar and white collar [labor]?

Harry: Yes, I think so, but everybody's important in the make-up of everything, and nothing's wrong with being down here if you have the tools, you've got a responsibility, and you like it. You've got to like it.

J.T.F.: Now, what do you -- you specifically -- try to do with students who don't seem to want to learn or don't seem to recognize the value of high school?

Harry: I think when they become high school students, my philosophy is you start treating them like an adult and they've got to take some responsibility, themselves, to come in, but I think -- yes as long as they are a student in my class I'm responsible to them. I owe them something. They owe me something. They have a right to fail, but they have a right to expect help. And I am going to have to try different ways until we've exhausted it. And that still comes back to their attitude. I've had probably over-achievers and I've had people that are probably gifted and do not care, and yet there's something to be said for both. There are over-achievers that make up for what they lack, and they make you feel good. It's the ones that have all the tools that have the missed opportunity by not using what has been available to them in school. It doesn't come back

-- that missed opportunity. It's like an arrow that's shot away, it doesn't come back.

J.T.F.: How individualized do you feel that teaching should be?

Jackie: Just as individualized as the numbers will allow. Now, if you have a class of ten or twelve or fifteen, even maybe, you could make it a lot more individualized, and that is the optimum. I quite agree with that. If you have a class of twenty-two to twenty-five, then that's a little more difficult, and I guess that's the problem that I have. My college bound students are all geared pretty much one way. My publications class students are geared toward production, and then the last hour of the day I have the students that all the way from a few freshmen to one or two seniors, mostly sophomores and juniors, who I'm not sure are geared any way; and that's the class that is my stumbling block, and that's where I really need to teach individualized. Perhaps if I were going to continue to teach, to teach again in the high school, I would try to select some summer courses to take that would help me with a different method of reaching that student -- low students. I think I reach two thirds of them, but a third of them that last hour I know I have left in the wake; and that's where I told you that I think that's the toughest decision to make in teaching: how high do you put the bait?

Harry: Oh, ideally that'd be the greatest thing -- the student on one end of the table, teacher on the other. I think because of costs that we may have to go the way some colleges have: big lectures, then break down to small groups where they talk. Individualized instruction... I will buy it as long as a teacher is involved, but if you're going to program it -- no. I think there is something you get from the teacher, the give and take.

J.T.F.: By program do you mean a computerized course?

Harry: Where they have these books where you write in the textbooks.

J.T.F.: Programmed texts?

Harry: I can't buy that, and that at one time was very fashionable. I don't know if it still is, but I think we need the give and take between student and teacher.

J.T.F.: Now, to what extent do you try to individualize?

Harry: We'll take our gifted and we have things for them to do; and work such as on computers and that. And on every test we set up a basic test and then we have bonus problems, six or seven or eight, and they are the ones that challenge the kids. And quite a few kids try them, and they are probably where they can't get them, but if they can get them, then they have a confidence level increased. Maybe sometimes they have a little ego trouble, but we do try to challenge them with extra stuff -- supplementary. I don't believe in tracking. I think they've got to be a homogeneous group, although we're headed for tracking. We have very much a lot of it now. We label you as somebody that's slow and not very fast, and you as super smart, and that; and that sometimes becomes ego problems here, and depression over here. Like I've got three strikes against me. We have kids that come in this school that do have three strikes against them before they even enter.

J.T.F.: Kind of along these same lines, then. How do you try to motivate students and how much of the teacher's job is motivation? Should the student motivate himself to some extent, I guess is what I'm saying. To what lengths should a teacher go to try to motivate the student?

Jackie: Oh, sure, the student should try to motivate himself; but I think the job of being the motivator is primarily the responsibility of the teacher. I think the teacher has to motivate by knowing the material, by having it organized, by finding out through trial and error that study guides will work or won't work, that videos will work or won't work, that lectures will work or won't work, that small individualized class discussions will work or won't work. Sometimes it has to be, you know, by trial and error thing. I think the responsibility for motivating rests with the teacher. That and discipline haven't been a hard thing for me, simply because I think I am a pretty well motivated person, and I know I'm an enthusiastic person, and I'm an optimistic person, and I think those are kind of good, key things for teachers to be. A friend of mine, who is a teacher, one day told me something interesting. He said, "you know, if I wake up in the morning and I'm not sick, but I just don't really feel very well, I call in sick and don't go to school." I was just aghast, because I have to be dead if I don't come to school. I said, "I don't understand that and I think that's terrible." And we just really went at it. And he said, "I'm not going to do a good job in that classroom if I'm not up." Well, see, I read into that that as adults we need to find some way to get ourselves up. That to me is like the student, and students do stay home today if they have a sore hang-nail, that to me is like the student who has a sniffle or who doesn't feel well.

They're going to find an excuse to stay home. But, you can't blame the student too much, Jeff, today for that; because lots of times mom and dad are both gone and there's nobody to get him up and motivate him or her to get to school.

Harry: Oh, I think reading current things in school... If something very unusual's in the newspaper and they've seen it, that's good. We just had a unit on probability and permutation, and that, and kids will see things in the paper; but I think you've got to ask them what they do...even if you've got to talk about matching pennies, or something. I think they've got to have some hands-on experience with it -- why you do this, what's important. We can do this in our method, in our teaching our course -- math -- where you can make reference to where it's applied and quite often bring in what hands-on experience... now that's for your low-level; your high-level you've got to have some abstract, where it exists in your mind. Our book is always building towards the abstract, and we try to go from where it's hands-on to abstract, and then try to convince the student by a certain discipline that we have built on. Geometry is built from nothing to a complete course, and math does have a wonderful structure and it has very few exceptions, and in our curriculum we go from here's what you have to generalization and we work at this by levels of attainment, whether it's by age or by courses that they have taken before, and so all people don't get it; but they should get some of it.

J.T.F.: You touched a little bit earlier on the Nation at Risk publication. Do you feel personally that the United States educational system is failing when placed up against Japanese and some European models, or are we comparing apples and oranges when we make those kind of comparisons?

Jackie: I think we are comparing apples and oranges. We're still comparing learning and teaching and basic things. I think we have a good system. I think it can definitely be better and I think we're on the track of making it better, and I think we need some eye-openers like that. I think it was a good thing that happened to education.

J.T.F.: You feel that just as an eye-opener, and kind of a shakedown, that that was the main purpose of it?

Jackie: Some of the studies that have been done since, some of my teacher friends were just incensed by it. It never angered me that much. I was able to separate what I thought was a little about what they were talking about that's wrong. Yeah, I hadn't thought about it that way before, and

I think we all needed to. I had made a diligent study of that and it hurt -- it was painful. I squirmed. I didn't like some of the things I saw myself doing; but, it was a learning experience for me, and I think we need that every once in a while.

J.T.F.: Do you feel that publications like that -- and of course, there have been others later now -- do you feel that it has been beneficial in terms of casting a very critical eye on the profession of teaching, not merely to criticizing just to denigrate the system? Perhaps before that time we had simply assumed that teachers knew what they were doing, and excellent in what they did, and now we are striving for that excellence that perhaps has not been there in the past?

Jackie: Yes, and I can't think of any profession of which the public should be more critical of than of teachers, and this annoys all of my fellow teachers, because they think we are in the lime light a lot and we don't get that respect we should get; but what profession should have more careful scrutiny than teaching? We have those people's priceless products -- their children. They're our tomorrow. We teach today so they can touch tomorrow, and I think people should be more critical of us than they are. More understanding, too. We're expected to do everything for today's child. We're expected to give them breakfast in some schools now, and I don't approve of that. Not just the breakfast, but I don't approve of having to do all those things; but, as far as the academic part's concerned, I think we should be under the public eye, and be called for credibility every step of the way.

Harry: I think apples and oranges. Of course, I'd be prejudiced. I don't think you can compare classes that you have. Every class is a different personality. Every class is different, and I'm glad that all people aren't smart, or all people aren't dumb. It would be a terrible world. We don't always measure... it used to be they had the New York Board of Regents where a teacher taught to pass the state test. I don't know how good that is. I'd say it's very stereotyped. I think we need to let a teacher go and try to, as you say, enthuse the student. We measure with the best Europeans and if they [European students] don't [pass certain exams] they're into vocational or apprentice or some other [area]. The Japanese are very strong family oriented. It's hard to measure with them. They do spend more time in school; their country spends more money on them; yes, best colleges. Where are all the best teachers? They're at the best colleges and they're paid the best salaries and this is true in Japan, and I think the pressure on the student has something to do with it. I don't think life is made up of

being the smartest thing. I think we need a balance in life. I don't feel bad about our system. I think sometimes in inner cities it's tougher. I wouldn't want to teach there. I'm out here on the broad Kansas plains, where I think Kansas as a whole has very good schools; so I can't be an expert on that. Quite often the experts are people that are in college and they sit in ivory towers and they are idealists, and they haven't had the real experience, or if it has been, it's been years ago. I've been on North Central evaluations and you can always count on the college guy being a very idealist, rather than practical. I don't feel bad about our school system. I think we have too many cooks trying to straighten it out. We have all sorts of people that have the answer, and I don't think the answer is there. I don't know what the answer is.

J.T.F.: Would you say, basically, that an educational system very much reflects the society that it's in, and in order for us to change our educational system, we would have to change our society, I mean our outlook on education as a society, first?

Harry: Oh, I think so. I think college towns are different than other towns. Big cities are different. I think where you have very many types of people, different nations and that, but I think that's what our society is; and how do we hold education -- and it's not so important as it has been. I don't know what the answer is.

J.T.F.: Can aspiring teachers -- these teachers who are in college now, majoring in education -- can they really be taught how to teach? Or is it something that comes with on the job training, so to speak? And kind of a follow-up to that: would a larger apprenticeship, a longer period of time as a student teacher out in the field, would that be of greater benefit than the block coursework that is currently used?

Jackie: I don't have the answer to what needs to be done, and if you can't have an answer, maybe you shouldn't be critical; but I do not feel that the way we have and are approaching student teaching and student teaching block is good. It's a false situation. It's so much easier when you get your own classroom than it does in that classroom where you've got a visiting teacher coming in to assess you, and students assessing you and filling out reports on you, and your supervising teacher doing it. I thought that was a horrendous experience, and I was older, so what must it be for you young kids surviving it? I have really struggled with this. I don't know what should be done. I don't know that a longer period of time will do it. I just think it

needs to be a different system, and somebody a lot smarter than I am is going to have to come up with it -- the method.

J.T.F.: You feel that a longer apprenticeship -- a longer student teaching period -- would only make that painful period last longer?

Jackie: Right now I do. Right now I do.

Harry: No, I think I probably have a different philosophy on that. I think good teaching comes from a long time... it comes from experience. Where does the experience come from? I think that we're stuck in something new, and your life you're learning how to swim, and you have to get into the swim of things; and it's going to take a while. You don't become real proficient at it [in a short time]. I think we are getting a lot of different ideas about teachers and teacher education that's going to cost a lot of money, and I think we're going to run kids out of it, because by the time they're through it there is no material reward for them, unless they really love it. A new teacher starts out, I think they are going to experience a lot of different things -- some very pleasant, some very unpleasant -- but I think they have to make a whack at it again. It's tough to follow a good teacher, and even if you have been teaching a long time, and you have to change your methods, you have to try something else, and after you have found out all the things that don't work, and you know what works, is isn't so bad.

J.T.F.: Do you think that a longer apprenticeship in the form of the student teaching set-up that we have right now, do you think that would be of greater benefit?

Harry: No, I don't know, see, I look at it like this: someone took me to be a student teacher. I went one hour a day for one semester. Now they expect you to take a student teacher. I'm very glad to, but I don't always agree with their philosophy that they should teach everything. You've got to consider the student sometimes, and I think we don't always do that. I don't agree completely. I think student teaching is good, and I think you may know that this student has something if you've got to work to get your class back, and that's what I consider a real good student teacher; and I've had them. I think the way we have it now is bad. I like them to send a teacher out and I can have them, say, for nine weeks, and I can turn them loose in this course after a while, and I think the teacher has to abandon the rule when he feels confident that student can handle it, because that student's got to... that's got to be their class. I don't think the student can mimmick the teacher.

They've got to be themselves, and then after they handle that area, then they go -- in our particular branch -- to another, and have a taste of two or three things; like you are sampling a nice buffet, and see what you can do, because there's going to be areas that your expertise isn't good on, and you may not be able to do the job in that area, but in another area you can. I think the way we have it is pretty good. I don't like the new-fangled ways they're coming out with. Now, that probably won't please a lot of people, but we have had very pleasant experiences with student teachers. Every so often a college will tell us, "no, you do it this way," and if they do, we won't take any more students. I think we've got to find out about them, and I think they'll do a good job.

J.T.F.: What value to you feel extra-curricular activities have in education, and I know there are a lot more extra-curricular activities available to students now, and have your views changed much from the early days to now toward extra-curricular activities?

Jackie: Probably not. I still feel, and a lot of people disagree with me, that the active student, the very active student, very, very active student is usually your better student in the classroom; that the more a student sets out to do, the busier the student is, the more involved he or she is, the better the student operates for me in the classroom. And I think extra-curricular are an absolute must. I don't think there's anyone... are you referring to things like debate, and things like that, as extra-curricular?

J.T.F.: Well, no, because those are...

Jackie: Are you referring to sports?

J.T.F.: Yeah, sports, school plays -- and I know you were one of the directors of plays and the musical -- and those types of... I guess DECCA, I don't know if they have that anymore, but...

Jackie: Oh, yes! Very active. They just got back from nationals.

J.T.F.: ...Stugo, those types of things that are extra-curricular.

Jackie: Just an unqualified yes. I think they're vital.

J.T.F.: You feel they are a learning experience, just as much as time spent in the classroom is?

Jackie: Provided they have a good sponsor or advisor, who is content to let the kids do it -- but is there in the background to make sure that it is done. Not what they want done, but what the kids will organize and get done. As long as it's just not a goof-off period.

Harry: I think when extra-curricular activities were started they had tremendous value. I still think they have a very positive value on school. I think it welds students together. I think it's good for some other things we don't teach, like responsibility, respect for others, loyalty, friendship, integrity. Sometimes we don't live by that in our extra-curricular activities. I don't think long ago that school boards would have put in extra-curricular activities if they didn't feel they had worth, and I still think we wouldn't have them if they weren't of worth. I know in our school I was amazed, the other day, about the Kayettes. They're an extra-curricular we have, which is some girls. They raised \$1,500 and they give it all away! A lot of clubs raise money and spend it on themselves, which isn't bad sometimes, but when you take a look at what the Kayettes did, now there's something there. Athletics, music, debate, these give students opportunities to show what they've learned, what their talent is. It doesn't have to be fancy, like a professional deal, but if they have the opportunity, and we have parents that enjoy seeing their offspring do that, and we have other people, and the value to the student that's doing it I think's tremendous. I feel that way about athletics; of course, I've been there. I think now we sometimes let get out of hand -- since T.V. I don't agree with Mr. Lombardo -- winning isn't the only thing, and I think you always compete a lot against yourself. You should be better each time -- should have a goal, and you should inch up on that goal; and I happen to be a proponent of extra-curricular activities. I think we need to ride herd on them, and be sure they're always controlled by the school, rather than groups outside the school.

J.T.F.: There has been some talk about that recently, that... some concern about whether or not teachers are still going to be sponsoring these activities, or if they're going to draw from the community. I take it from what you're saying that should definitely be within the school system, and keep school sponsors?

Harry: Yes. I tell you this: everybody has some problems. I don't think... I think we need to solve our problems. I don't think everybody needs to know about problems that exist. Sometimes that can hurt those involved. I think school teachers, and coaches, and school officials in

general have done a good job about handling things like that. The pay isn't good, the hours are long, and it's keeping up now with the Joneses; but I think if we're going to do it, I feel like it should come there. I wouldn't want to be involved in an activity where we have someone... not that there aren't many, many people capable... but I still think it's a confidential thing, and I don't care how you look at it, the teacher's with the student every day. The person that comes in -- not in school -- doesn't know the problem the student... the mood of the student, and that. I'm not talking about major problems. I'm talking about little problems that sometimes can develop into very big problems, like making a mountain out of a mole hill.

J.T.F.: Someone outside of the school system would not be aware of some of the things that are going on, and would be sort of, I guess, out of place, or out of touch with what's really happening?

Harry: And I think a student would sometimes, I don't know what you would say, would not like somebody else outside the system being involved in their problem. They don't -- very seldom -- they don't wish to have teachers involved in their problems now, but they do have counselors involved. Used to be the teachers were the counselors, now we have them full time, and sometimes teachers are still counselors. They are told confidential things. But I think we in this school, I feel like -- which I've said -- I teach in the best town in the state of Kansas, and the best school. Why? Because of the students that are in it, and the teachers; and kids sometimes say tough things about this school, but you know what? What do you judge your school on? It's students and they're part of the school. And kids... I think we need to sometimes build loyalty because a school, whether it's this school or any school, probably the only school they'll go to. They need to have a good experience out of it. They need to think it's good, and have loyalty, because they won't go any place else; and if they have a bad attitude toward school, then you're not going to accomplish much.

J.T.F.: What do you feel makes an award-winning teacher, and are these qualities inherent?

Jackie: Like what you do, love your kids, and never be satisfied with going just a few hours a day to it. You have to love students. You have to be enthusiastic. I just think that's all it takes, because I'm proof that it can't be just the smarts to do it. I've not had that, I've had to compensate.

J.T.F.: You feel that it's... it sounds like you feel it's a little combination of both -- partly inherent, and partly what you train yourself.

Jackie: Yes, I do, but I think we have too many teachers that have gotten into teaching and have been unhappy, and have stayed with it -- to the detriment of the students and themselves. If they don't like it, get out of it! If you don't... find something else to do.

Harry: I don't know. I think you have to ask kids that have had that teacher, and I don't think kids know whether a teacher's good... I know I didn't know that some of my teachers were good until ten years later. I feel that it's pick and choose, and it's like in athletics, you're good and you're lucky; and the lucky ones in our school system... we have lots of good teachers, that's what makes it good, because I as a colleague think I teach with a very fine teacher. He hasn't been very lucky, but he's still great, and I don't know what makes it... I think some of the things you've got to look at that we've talked about -- you've got to like kids, you've got to let them know you care, you've got to say, "I've got something for you, do you have something for me? Can we have an exchange?" You have to have rapport with them, you've got to have interest in them. Everything revolves around the student. They're your bread and butter, and as you look at it, as the school looks at it, and the administration... what can we do for them? And if you consider all these aspects, and I think those are some qualities. I think you have to have... I'll be truthful, you've got to have ethics, and I think sometimes, whether you can do it or not, I think you've got to have some toughness. Tell them you care, you're doing it that way, and that they are going down the wrong road, as diplomatic as you can do it. And I don't think even in my class, where I teach math... I always teach a lot of math; I teach a lot of other things, and kids sometimes get you off the subject, but that's what you... there's where you can do it; and who else do they have that they spend as much time with as the teachers? And so, I think the teachers have a golden opportunity, not only to teach the subject, but teach all those other things -- and the public expects us to -- and if we don't do it we're "a nation at risk," and who is the greatest scapegoat of all? The school.