

Christina Norton
History of American Education: Oral History Project
Interview with Theresa Buntain
Via Skype
Morning of March 17, 2017
Length: 1:11:45

1 **Christina Norton:** Alright, okay good morning Mrs. Buntain. I am here with Mrs. Buntain.
2 Right now she is in Kentucky, Louisville, Kentucky enjoying a break, but she is from Fort Scott
3 Kansas. And I am here in Irving, Texas um and we are here on March 17 St Patrick's day 2017.
4 Um so I am conducting this this interview for my oral history project at the University of Dallas
5 for my History of American Education class. The purpose of this interview is just to initiate
6 conversation regarding education and educational experiences and I have the pleasure this
7 morning to hear about Mrs. Buntain's experiences with education and listen to her own unique
8 perspective. Um so this interview will be recorded and transcribed and the final recording and
9 transcription will be housed in the University of Dallas oral history repository. Does that sound
10 okay with you Mrs. Buntain?

11 **Theresa Buntain:** That sounds fine with me.

12 **CN:** Alright, how are you this morning?

13 **TB:** I am good this morning. Happy St. Patrick's day.

14 **CN:** Good, thank you. Alright, so we will start with our first question. Um how would you
15 describe your elementary school experience?

16 **TB:** My elementary school experience was um between public school and catholic school,
17 because I started kindergarten in a public school, because we didn't have kindergarten at our
18 catholic school. So I went from there to St. Mary's and for some reason I knew that St. Mary's
19 was more special, you know even at that kindergarten age. And I was taught by nuns at St.
20 Mary's school in Fort Scott, Kansas.

21 **CN:** Very nice, and so were all your teachers nuns in Fort Scott or...?

22 **TB:** They weren't. We had a lay teacher for third and fourth grade. Our grades were combined so
23 I had a nun for first and second and a lay teacher for third and fourth, a sister for fifth and sixth
24 and then a sister for seventh and eighth. But our school closed before I got to the eighth grade.
25 So I switched into a junior high for my eighth and ninth grades. Yeah, the way ours was set up in
26 the whole town was we had an east side and a west side and the public schools went to um they
27 went to sixth grade and then everybody converged at the junior high for seventh, eighth, and
28 ninth. So if you came from St. Mary's and graduated there from the eighth grade you only went
29 to the junior high for one year, for ninth grade and then went to the high school. But as it
30 happened they didn't actually close the school but they hacked off the seventh and eighth grades
31 so you know trying to cut expenses. So um I went through seventh grade and those eight graders
32 and seventh graders, we all went over to the junior high and then from then on St. Mary's school

33 was, well for one year, was first through sixth grade, and then after that they just closed it for like
34 15 years, but then it got reopened.

35 CN: Oh really, well that's good.

36 TB: And it only went through fifth grade because back then they had made the junior high into a
37 middle school, so it covered sixth, seventh, and eighth and the high school took on an extra grade
38 so it was nine, ten, eleven, and twelve.

39 CN: So, is St. Mary's K-5th now? Is that-

40 TB: Yeah, well it is preschool through fifth. Yeah instead of adding on to the older grades we
41 started younger.

42 CN: Oh, yeah that is an interesting trend. Umm so how would you describe your overall, I guess,
43 classroom experiences at St. Mary's?

44 TB: Our classes were really small and my experiences were the boys were bad and the girls were
45 good.

46 CN: Sounds pretty typical.

47 TB: You know we just kind of let the boys be bad and the girls were all good and the sisters'
48 favorites. They were tough, we learned a lot. And it was pretty well known in the public school
49 that the St. Mary's kids were smart. But that wasn't necessarily true but that's how they felt.

50 CN: Yeah, it had the reputation.

51 TB: I mean maybe it was true for some kids, but not for others. It was also known that we could
52 play ball because that's what we did every recess. (Time: 5:14)

53 CN: Oh really. What kind of ball? Like-

54 TB: We played softball.

55 CN: Softball. Oh, okay.

56 TB: We had a big field and if you didn't play softball you jumped rope.

57 CN: So, did you have sports teams-athletic teams at St. Mary's?

58 TB: We did yeah um they, as the school was kind of waning out, they kind of let that go. And
59 there were other small Catholic schools that we played in the area. We were the St. Mary's
60 falcons. We had basketball and then in the spring if any other Catholic schools wanted to play we
61 would have baseball too or softball. We play each other, playgrounds is where we played. Yeah
62 we had a basketball team.

63 CN: Basketball, very nice.

64 TB: We built the gymnasium in the early 60s, the John F Kennedy Gymnasium. So we had a
65 gym to play basketball.

66 CN: Wow that's nice. So what do you think was the typical class size?

67 TB: Um my class was about seven kids but I think they would be from anywhere from twelve to
68 probably seven or eight kids.

69 CN: Oh that's good. So you were still-I guess-so you had about one basketball team-one
70 basketball team. Did you have a softball team or did you just play softball at recess?

71 TB: We just played softball at recess Sometimes the nuns played with us. The lay teacher-she
72 always-she would be the umpire with third and fourth grade. She kept track of everything on a
73 little piece of paper and we would go out for the next recess and she would say so and so was up,
74 he had two strikes...I mean we continued right where it was.

75 CN: That's fun.

76 TB: Yeah it was fun.

77 CN: So what kind of classes did you take? What subjects do you remember?

78 TB: At St. Mary's? Um well we had religion. And we combined religion and art together or tried
79 to. Um we had well just your basic-we had penmanship. Um and the reading, writing, arithmetic.
80 We didn't-um I guess we had a little composition you know because we wrote some papers. I
81 remember writing a paper in a composition about the hospital- the doctors and nurses and the
82 school/sisters probably had some kind of mercy healthcare week or something. Yeah, and I got
83 published.

84 CN: Oh, really! that's exciting.

85 TB: Our hospital/Fort Scott used to have a little paper- I don't remember what it was called, but I
86 think they printed one every month and they had contest winners in it.

87 CN: Ah that's fun. That is always exciting to get your piece of writing published.

88 TB: Yeah, yeah it was cool

89 CN: Alright so you left St. Mary's in eighth grade, you said?

90 TB: I didn't complete eighth grade there and graduate from St. Mary's. They just phased us out
91 and I went over to the junior high

92 CN: Okay, the junior high

93 TB: For eighth grade-eighth and ninth.

94 CN: For eighth and ninth, and from the junior high you moved to the high school

95 TB: Uh huh.

96 CN: Ok so tell me about the transition from St. Mary's to junior high.

97 TB: That was a little different. Um there was a girl in the eighth grade-she had a connection
98 with-she had friends in the public schools and they were having tryouts for cheerleading, pom-

99 pom, and things like that. So um she asked the rest of us if we wanted to try out, and I did. And
100 so she and I went over there after school, and we just walked everywhere in Fort Scott, you could
101 walk in those days, kind of laughs-if you lived in town. And we would go over there after
102 school, and we'd practice the routine with others. And then there was a day when they had
103 tryouts. And it was kind of scary because you had to try out in front of this whole- you know
104 seventh, eighth and ninth grade- in front of the school and I got it! So-

105 CN: Oh good! That's exciting.

106 TB: And she did too. So we were in that together which gave- that was a whole new world for
107 me- it made it really great for me because then I had instant friends, you know I had like a team
108 of people. There was drama, you know the usual girl stuff too. But right off the bat, I went to a
109 camp which...for pom-pom. And I also had a uniform to wear which saved me because we were
110 pretty poor. And I wore my uniform so many days a week. You know it saved us on clothes.
111 Nobody would have known but we didn't have a lot of money. So that was the pom-pom thing.

112 CN: Ah, well good. So- (Time: 11:12)

113 TB: Speaking of uniforms, we did wear uniforms at St. Mary's in third grade and then they just
114 kind of dropped it later on. Yeah, that was probably a complaint of parents or something like
115 that. So, for my last three years there I didn't wear a uniform. Which was sad to my mother
116 because then we had to come up with clothes to wear.

117 CN: Yeah it is difficult. Okay so eighth through ninth grade in junior high. And this was just the
118 local junior high at Fort Scott?

119 TB: Mhmm. The one and only.

120 CN: The one and only. Was it attached to the high school?

121 TB: No, it was a separate building downtown. Umm though it was blocks away from the high
122 school. Yeah, I did that and I did pom-pom in my eighth and ninth grades.

123 CN: Okay, very cool. So how would you compare the class size of your junior high versus your
124 elementary?

125 TB: Well, they were a lot bigger. Yeah, a lot bigger. Probably you know, two to three sizes
126 bigger. Also, I remember thinking that, um you know, they thought that we were smart but you
127 could also tell that the popular more affluent families- their kids got in the classes that had the
128 better teachers and if you really weren't known that well then you got the duds. You got into the-
129 the teachers weren't necessarily duds- they just weren't popular teachers, but also their classes
130 were with kids that were struggling or were troublemakers and that is kind of where I was put my
131 first year and some of my friends too. We were- I don't know- it was kind of like we were an
132 unknown to the staff or something and so they just slotted us into classes. Yeah.

133 CN: So how big do you think the- I guess the whole student body was- if you have like different
134 classes for- sounds like you have different classes for each grade?

135 TB: Different classes for each grade?

136 CN: Um like you- well where St. Mary's, your whole class was like seven, seven students?

137 TB: Yeah, we had one teacher or unless we had a-if we had a lay teacher, then we had a sister
138 come in to teach religion- religion and art. But yes, we moved around and that was different. And
139 our school was three floors so we had to learn, you know, where our classes were and yeah we
140 moved around for every class. And I remember I started out-and math was not my best subject-
141 and I had one of the scariest math teachers first thing in the morning. And I had allergies really
142 bad and my folks-my dad was a milkman and my mom and us girls we delivered papers for the
143 Wichita. So we would go out in the morning hours in the dew and my allergies would be awful
144 and then I would have to go to this new school, you know, with this scary teacher. And I just
145 prayed he wouldn't call me to the board. But then I was happy because my next hour was right
146 next door and it was art class and it was more relaxed. (Time: 15:06)

147 CN: So, do you feel that instruction in your junior high school was any different from that of
148 your elementary school or do you think it was pretty similar?

149 TB: Oh, it was definitely different- way different. Yeah, um I noticed that the kids didn't
150 necessarily respect the teachers as much- it was more- although I had a scary math teacher I felt
151 like our classes were a little more relaxed. We had um- hey we would have pop parties
152 sometimes, you know on a Friday. Somebody would go around and collect dimes and then
153 someone would get picked to go to the pop ? and pull pop out of the machines for us. And um,
154 boy we never did anything like that in the Catholic school. And oh, also they had Special Ed
155 there too which was different for me. They had just one classroom for those kids and um, I was
156 interested in that for a while and then um- well in fact I think it was my senior year you know,
157 we have like a work-study class or something and um so I chose to go-at the elementary level
158 they had a little house connected with one of the elementary schools and that's where they had-
159 we called it the little retarded schoolhouse simply because that's where the Special Ed kids were.
160 So I chose to go there and help that teacher during a particular hour of the day and work with
161 those kids. Yeah that was interesting. I kind of liked it.

162 CN: Ok so that was your senior year-

163 TB: And I did notice too at the junior high level that the discipline was handled by like the vice
164 principal or the principal. I mean it didn't seem that- teachers didn't have to bother with it at all.
165 If there was an unruly kid, out you went and you went to the office and they dealt with it. But at
166 our little Catholic school, you know, there wasn't anybody to go to- I mean there was a principal
167 that would be one of the sisters, but the sisters pretty much just dealt with their own problems-
168 unless it was just really, really, bad um and then I think they would call the parents and talk to
169 them.

170 CN: Yeah that's interesting- the difference there.

171 TB: Yeah, I don't recall there being a detention at St. Mary's. For me- I mean maybe it's because
172 I never had it. Um if people got in trouble-if kids got in trouble- they did work. Like they'd have
173 to clean something. I guess that would be their punishment after school- I guess that was

174 detention. But heck, if I was asked to stay after school and do something- my girlfriend and I
175 would have loved it. Because we would get to help the teacher. We would think that was fun.

176 CN: Well let's see did you notice- you mentioned the building in junior high was a lot bigger-did
177 you notice any difference in like the resources um available to each school or just different
178 resources that were used for instruction?

179 TB: Yeah um, well there was a bigger library. The science rooms you know they would have- I
180 never saw anything used in science rooms- but I know that they had things there. Maybe it's
181 because I didn't take it in ninth grade but um other than that no...oh well they had lunch. They
182 had lunch- the lunchroom was in the library area but we didn't- we didn't have cafeteria or
183 kitchen or anything. We brought our own lunches to St. Mary's. So that was a whole new
184 experience for me. I- it never occurred to me that kids actually got fed at school by somebody
185 else- somebody else fixed their meal. That was different.

186 CN: Alright, well let's talk about high school. We've already touched on it some. So from the
187 junior high, you went a couple blocks over to high school. And that was from ninth to twelfth
188 grade? Or yes, was it ninth to twelfth?

189 TB: Yeah back then it was ninth through twelfth. No! sorry it was ten through twelfth.

190 CN: Ten through twelfth. Okay. Okay, so how was that transition, moving from junior high to
191 high school?

192 TB: Oh, I just thought of something else about junior high. They had P.E. They had gym class
193 and showers. Yeah and they did have sports teams, yeah.

194 CN: Yeah, I guess more so than St. Mary's, for sports teams?

195 TB: Oh, definitely. They had football, basketball, and um well what else did they have? They
196 had track. Yeah and mainly for the boys. Yeah, back then.

197 CN: Oh yeah, so what were the main girls' activities or sports?

198 TB: Well we were in cheerleading or pom-pom.

199 CN: Cheerleading or pom-pom. What's the difference between cheerleading and pom-pom?

200 TB: Well pom-pom, now they would call it dance, but we didn't-um it was just different-
201 cheerleading was a smaller group maybe 5 or 6 girls and we actually did cheers and maybe some
202 stunts, but pom-pom was to music and not like the dances today. It was a lot of kicking

203 CN: Like on the movies you see. Fun.

204 TB: Yeah, well we didn't have girls sports, but that was different in having this huge gym- they
205 had a large gym and they had an old gym down below and we played, instead of recess, you
206 know how it is, you go to these other things and I am telling you playing floor hockey with some
207 of those girls- that was a challenge. And then you know the showering. So as far as what was
208 available to us, that was something else too. I mean I guess you would consider that a classroom,
209 right? Okay what was the question?

210 CN: Oh, okay so moving from junior high to high school- umm how would you- was that a
211 smooth transition or do you think it was still pretty different in regards to junior high?

212 TB: For me it was pretty smooth. I guess um, I don't know I had a brother then that was in the
213 high school. He wasn't with me um at the junior high because he was already in high school like
214 you know for tenth grade. So um he drove me to school and the transition to classrooms was
215 kind of like- it was kind of like um junior high with more freedom. You know and the school
216 was much larger, you would find your way around. Again it was three stories, parts of it. It was
217 three stories um and I liked that I didn't have to take some classes, I mean I knew that like
218 chemistry, I didn't even know where that room was. And you know. And so it was just a lot of
219 fun. I guess I was a little socialite or something because I had a lot of friends that was my main
220 thing I didn't like missing school and friends.

221 CN: So how- how did the class schedule work for you? Did you have block periods? Or was it
222 just-

223 TB: No, we just had you know regular um about an hour periods you know and then they gave us
224 maybe five minutes to get to our classes in between-something like that- and uh- oh also there
225 was a big transition going to a locker- St. Mary's to using lockers- having your very own or
226 actually share a locker- I think we shared lockers yeah and then did so in high school too. Sorry I
227 just keep remembering...(trails off)- (Time: 25:09)

228 CN: No lockers are so exciting. I remember getting those in school too. Even though like we
229 didn't even need to use them but it was just an exciting thing to have.

230 TB: We needed to use ours so, yeah, I liked having my own private little square foot space.

231 CN: Yeah, that's nice. So, what high school classes do you remember taking or what are some
232 that stood out to you?

233 TB: Things that stood out to me were- like I was terrible at geometry- scared me to death. I was
234 very good at accounting. I liked that. I loved my English classes. Um and biology because I had
235 my best girlfriend on one side of me and my soon after later to be husband on the other side of
236 me. And they liked what they were doing so. Got the frogs, the slugs. When they finished their
237 project, they did mine. Um again there was P.E. and um well I remember my English classes a
238 lot. I took Spanish. Our English classes were uh each quarter of the school year you changed it
239 up. You went from say composition, to like a reading class, to a grammar class, and- yeah we did
240 it like that back then. I'm sure that you know how things roll around let's try it this way now
241 let's try it this way, that didn't work or- that type of thing. But that is the way they did it then.
242 So, you knew that if you didn't like what you were in it would be over at the end of the quarter.
243 And if you did like it, you were mad because you had to move on to something else...(trails off)
244 for last.

245 CN: So, did they just do that with the English classes or were other classes that way too?

246 TB: I think it was just the English class because there is so many you know things to teach in
247 English so many segments that- that's how they did that.

248 CN: So, did you get- what were the choices like in regards to classes? Were there a lot of
249 different choices you could choose or were you pretty limited?

250 TB: There were a lot um we- I don't think we had Latin back then but you could take French or
251 Spanish. Um and then those- like those English classes- you can be in any grade and then
252 choose-like which one you wanted to take. Well of course then we had French II and Spanish II.
253 You know you could continue on that route. Um we had um- I was trying to think of something
254 social like- I don't remember what- well we had drama. And um yeah so there was theater. We
255 had debate, forensics. Um I don't know and then of course the math classes would advance you
256 know. You could go from geometry to trig to you know- it's much like they do now. Some of the
257 kids would take classes because they wanted a particular teacher you know. Oh and we had
258 history and I don't remember a um geography class. Probably had that during history or
259 something you know. Yeah we had social studies and things like that. Gary would bring current
260 events to our social studies class and they came from *Mad Magazine*. You probably don't know
261 about *Mad Magazine*... (trails off) *National Lampoon Magazine*. (Time: 30:06)

262 CN: So, he brought those to your all's social studies- was that included in your all's history class
263 or was that like its own-

264 TB: No, it was separate. Yeah. Our history class at least mine was taught by a coach and he had a
265 spiral notebook that was really fat and he read to us. He would read and we would write what he
266 read. He would read and we would write what he read. So we ended up with a notebook kind of
267 like his and that was how he taught. It was so boring. It was so awful. And he never did anything
268 to change it. It was year after year after year because it was history. His main thing was football
269 you know. And then later he became a principal and he was really bad. You know one thing I
270 forgot to is um music. We had um girls glee and we had a choir that was boys and girls. The girls
271 could only, well, boys could be in the big choir because they needed boys in the big choir. But if
272 you were a sophomore girl, you had to be in girls glee because they didn't need any more girls in
273 the big choir. You know, you have to work things out.

274 CN: Figure out that balance.

275 TB: Yeah and there was band and there was an orchestra at the junior high and I don't know I
276 guess it was there at the high school too but I didn't know it existed until we got our yearbook.
277 And then we had woodshop you know. And I don't know if we had auto mechanics back then or
278 not, but I think we did. And then by then girls could play sports too. So my battery is running
279 low so I'm going to have to plug that in. So...Gary is going to help me get battery-or get the plug.
280 Anyway, yeah so then social life expanded because we weren't just in you know the
281 cheerleading and pom-pom and all of that and we also had student council which I guess we
282 probably had at Junior high too but I wasn't in it. But yeah..

283 CN: So, let's see. Um so you mentioned with your experience with the history teacher- how did
284 you- (audio breaking up)- sorry, can you hear me?

285 TB: Oh, I am having trouble with audio.

286 CN: Yeah let's see.

287 TB: Can you hear me?

288 CN: Yeah. Can you hear me okay?

289 TB: I am having trouble with audio. Maybe I'll get Janet to help. Hey, Janet there is a problem.
290 Since I plugged in the battery now it's a little sketchy. But let's keep trying. Now what?
291 Something about the history teacher.

292 CN: Okay, so how did most of your teachers I guess instruct the class- um can you hear that?

293 TB: Um how did most of them instruct the class? Most of them um stood at the front of the class,
294 um maybe they would walk around you know kind of walk through the rows of desks. We had
295 regular desks with tops. I know things are different now, they have a lot tables and things in
296 classes-some desks- but um they would walk around and if someone was being disruptive they
297 might you know tap them on the shoulder, knock on their desk, something like that. Um pretty
298 much- of course it depended on what class it was too- how much- how lively they were. The
299 personality of the teacher. We had an English teacher who would get up on her desk if she
300 wanted to make an important point, she would climb right up on the desk and she was real
301 theatrical like and she uh if she wanted to read to us out of something you know she would just
302 do that and you would remember. (Time: 35:00)

303 CN: Wow. Yeah that would be exciting.

304 TB: Yeah. Remember when Mrs. E (abbreviated) got on the desk...laughing...you know

305 CN: So, what kind of-I guess- classroom activities- what kind of classroom activities?

306 TB: Classroom Activities? Um well like in our biology we had labs that we did um. I think in the
307 regular reading, writing, arithmetic kind of thing the teacher was at the front of the class and you
308 just took instruction you know. I can't think, I don't remember. Oh well we had competitions
309 like we would go to the next town where Pittsburg state university was- it was the next college
310 and we would compete maybe in poetry um different things like that and music.

311 CN: Mhmm, okay very cool. So are there any achievements or special moments that you
312 remember as standing out in your education?

313 TB: Okay you'll have to say that again. Any achievements or?

314 CN: Special moments

315 TB: Oh, hold on. Oh okay, Janet is saying if it gets real bad we can hang up and call again. Okay
316 so any special achievements or?

317 CN: Special moments that you remember in your education that's impacted you through the
318 years?

319 TB: Um special moments for me in my education. Well there was a time when you know I told
320 you I did really well at accounting and it surprised me because I wasn't really good at math that's
321 when I found out I really like organization and you know like I am a lister and all that. Well that
322 teacher made an example out of me if like out of every class period we would hand in our tests

323 and he would immediately say well I'm just going to read the answers off of my test because I
324 would always do really well. And I started feeling the pressure that I didn't like it at all and I
325 purposely wasn't handing in homework. I didn't want him doing that so I just didn't do it and I
326 dropped like an A to a C- or something the third semester-third quarter. And then he had a little
327 talk with me. He asked me what was wrong and I told him I just don't like that. And he just
328 knocked it off and I went right back up to an A+. see I wonder now- why do kids do stuff like
329 that? Well I don't know if it was just like- I am going to show him you know or I am going to be
330 like the other kids or what but I started not liking him. And I liked him fine at the beginning and
331 I was really learning a lot. I was really interested in it, but I could tell that the other kids weren't
332 and I felt different so anyway, that's one thing.

333 CN: Yeah, that's interesting. So let's think about memorable experiences or significant events
334 either in your community or on a bigger level like national or global.

335 TB: Oh, you know I thought about this when I saw this question and I was trying to think back
336 and I remember that in Fort Scott I don't know if you have ever heard of urban renewal. Towns
337 were kind of falling apart you know and um Walmarts were coming in. and actually the
338 infrastructure of the town was kind of just coming apart and so they talked about urban renewal a
339 lot and so suddenly there were committees you know popping up in town to cover different
340 things and I think we ended up putting awnings in front of our stores downtown or something
341 like that and then they always talked about the brick streets that we have and all and then another
342 thing nationally was um energy crisis. There was an energy crisis so gas was going up like it got
343 over 50 cents a gallon (laughing) you know how it is now. But you know when I was in third (?)
344 I would go home and my mom would say there's a gas war so she would go out and fill up cars
345 for 19 cents or 18 cents whoever you know because it was by the hour gas was going down in
346 price. And so when I was in high school it seemed like it was about in the 30s and 40s cents and
347 then it started creeping up and creeping up into the 70s and I remember a girlfriend saying if it
348 gets over a dollar, I'm riding my bike because I can't afford that. And I don't know if it ever got
349 over a dollar while we were in high school, but I do remember too that they wanted us to start
350 turning our lights off at night- not keeping them on. And yeah that was also when I was in school
351 we had a representative who in Washington who was trying to get our fort as a national park.
352 And so as you know he got that done. And I remember it was really well lit and during the
353 energy crisis people would say well they got the fort lit up all night long. You're trying to save
354 energy. And they also lowered the speed limits on the interstates to 55 so to save energy and also
355 save lives.

356 CN: Yeah, yeah huh that's interesting.

357 TB: But it's so funny because here we are still using energy. They didn't talk about energy
358 efficient cars back then until this all started happening. It really hit you when you had a car that
359 got 10 miles to the gallon you know and some people did.

360 CN: Mhmm alright so ok so you entered the field of education. What prompted you to enter that
361 field as an adult?

362 TB: Okay. Well I had a really good English teacher in junior high. I really admired her. I thought
363 she looked like she had fun teaching and I liked English a lot. And um I thought that maybe I
364 would do that. Well I didn't go to college. I took some college classes but what happened was I
365 ended up working for the insurance company that was in our town and by that time it employed
366 over 800 people and we were a town of about 8,000. So it was a big company and uh later on
367 that company sold to another and when that happened they gave us the opportunity to um learn
368 more about the company and grow in our income and I did that so instead of just being a
369 secretary or clerk type person I became an underwriter, an insurance underwriter. And I took-
370 they wanted us to get those titles that they have in insurance and so I took a class- actually I
371 would take the classes maybe inside the company and then it was connected with the college so
372 we could earn college credit. And so I did some of those and then our company was bought again
373 by another company and it was dwindling down but it was around 200 people and that company
374 decided to close us. So after 20 years with the insurance company, I was done. And I stayed at
375 home for a while. Our youngest was in-Michelle-she was in pre-school well she was in daycare.
376 We had a pre-school (trails off)...you know so I was kind of part-time stay at home mom type
377 person and wondering what I was going to do and get this story: I was wondering if I should go
378 to college you know and maybe I could be a teacher or um just get another job and by then I was
379 kind of sick of working too. And so I was out on our deck one day and I was praying, telling God
380 you know I am just going to get real specific about this. I don't want to work full-time. And I
381 don't know if I should go to school or not, but we need some income and I really don't want to
382 work in a place- I wanted a good environment, not a toxic environment with gossip and talk and
383 people running around on each other which we had in the company that I was with. I just wanted
384 something different and I was just asking God, can you come up with something like that for me
385 you know. And then these birds flew over and I thought oh God the Father, God the Son, and
386 God the Holy Spirit. And then after a day or two, I got a phone call from the principal at St.
387 Mary's School wanting to know if I could sub- they wanted to put me on a subbing list and he
388 said do you have at least an Associate's degree and I said no, I don't so I can't sub, but I would
389 love to do that and I thought Wow that was all three things answered in one phone call where I
390 could work in a good environment, go back to school and get my Associate's at least and then
391 substitute teach so all rolled in. I got that answer. So when I was forty I went back- I went to
392 college at the community college in Fort Scott. And it was there that I was getting tutoring for
393 algebra because I hadn't had that since ninth grade. And the girl that was tutoring me- was
394 actually a class behind me in high school and she said I got two- I told her though, I needed to do
395 something for income. I just can't go to school full-time and she said well I got two part-time
396 jobs and I need to give one up so would you like to work for the choir teacher at the middle
397 school? We now had a middle school. And I said well yeah, I'll see and I didn't have to do
398 anything- I just kind of filled out an application and they'd already decided to hire me and I got
399 on. And that's how I got in the schools. And I did substitute when I graduated. I substitute taught
400 in the afternoons um or in the mornings and then I would go to the middle school and be a music
401 aide there. And then I quit that job to go full-time substitute teaching and that's when I found
402 out- boy did I hate that. I did not like subbing. It was awful- the kids were just awful for you
403 know, they see you coming and they're really not good. And so I didn't like that very good. But-

404 CN: Did you substitute...no go ahead, I am sorry. (Time: 49:31)

405 TB: Well because I was in the music department already part-time and our son was in band, then
406 the band director was saying hey would you like to work for me like I had for the choir teacher
407 and had quit and I thought well yeah but I'd really like to do it full-time, but they couldn't. So I
408 continued to sub and then worked for him. And then finally he said hey I can get you on full-time
409 working with the music, so I was still in the schools with the kids and doing that. And I wasn't
410 the boss, so the kids weren't bad because the teacher was always there and that's how that
411 happened.

412 CN: Yeah, I didn't realize those were all so closely intertwined there. That's neat. So with your
413 substituting, what schools did you substitute in?

414 TB: I subbed in all grades. Um we had two elementary- well we had the St. Mary's Catholic
415 school, but those teachers rarely missed unless they had meetings to go to or something. And
416 then we have um two elementary schools in town and the junior-or middle school and the high
417 school and I subbed for all those grades.

418 CN: Wow that's impressive.

419 TB: And I'll tell you, it was pretty revealing who was on top of their teaching and who wasn't
420 because the classrooms um well it's kind of funny- I felt like the ones who were more organized,
421 their classrooms looked like it. They were more organized. They were on top of their lessons and
422 all that. And then we had teachers who when you went to go and try to find a pen or something
423 and their desk drawers were stuffed. And then they had file cabinets that were stuffed with
424 things. I thought how...organized you know. They were probably great teachers winging it you
425 know. I've also found, Christina, that some teachers especially the elementary teachers, if kids
426 didn't get it, they didn't have time- they moved on. You know and I thought it was so sad
427 because sometimes when I was subbing you know they said from this time to this time you are
428 going to do this lesson and it was very, very structured and they had to just keep moving and I
429 felt like, but this little girl- she's not writing- she's not done with her paper or whatever it didn't
430 matter. You just pick it up and you move on to the next thing. And really they just kind of got
431 bull-dozed over you know. So I just felt like a tutoring thing- if they could incorporate that
432 somehow- would be good. And they do- they take some kids out for special reading classes. You
433 know I don't know if they do it for special- for math, but you know that they try to help them.
434 But they for some reason, they- see we got the lower kids in with the regular kids and the higher
435 kids they're all in the same classrooms. I don't think that works very good. Because I just feel
436 like the kids who are low are just going lower.

437 CN: They're just going lower. Yeah it definitely is hard finding that- that right set-up there,
438 grouping-wise. So how do you think your experience as both a choir assistant, a band assistant
439 and a substitute teacher- how do you think those experi- (poor reception)

440 TB: I lost ya. I didn't get hardly any of that.

441 CN: Ah that's okay. Let's see.

442 TB: No I want to hear it. Let's try it.

443 CN: Okay, um how do you think your substitute experience has impacted your view towards
444 education and teaching?

445 TB: Um my view toward- well toward teaching- I realized that if you're a good teacher, they
446 really are a special person because I've also noticed that they kind of continue it in their own
447 lives too- it's kind of how they live their lives, I mean they're interested in learning as much as
448 teaching. You know they continue to- they're just that way um and it has to be a special thing
449 you know and you can't get lazy about it you know. But then I see the ones that are that way and
450 I think that boy you need to- that are lazier or are not interested anymore and I think it's best that
451 they get out, get out as soon as they feel that feeling because they aren't doing anybody any
452 favor...I mean if you're just going for a paycheck, it's not...(laughing)

453 CN: Hi! (laughing)

454 TB: I thought Ginger was going to jump up on me, but she went to the other end of the couch. So
455 and as far as- you said teachers and just education? Um I don't think the kids grasp why they're
456 really there you know, you know what I mean. School is what they do (laughing). Until they get
457 a little older and get into high school, some of them know and understand the importance of it.
458 But um, I don't know, I was fascinated by some of the teachers and how dedicated they really
459 are. And then I am equally fascinated by the ones that are there, I don't know for what reason
460 you know- why are you here to do this? Because I mean they could go get a job somewhere else
461 and go deal with adults and not deal with kids. You know at some point they must have had the
462 desire to do it but- and maybe it was kind of like with me- maybe they went through four years
463 of college and I am going to teach and all that and they got into it and decided they didn't like it.
464 Well it was easy for me on a subbing level because I just walked away, you know I could do
465 something else and... so anyway for education, I wish that, at least in our schools, I wish that
466 after- maybe after sophomore year- they started breaking up the usual classes and let kids go do
467 trade school things more you know. Because they're not going to go to college, they don't want
468 to go, it's not suited for them, and it doesn't mean they're dumb. They're just, you know, more
469 suited for something else- things that other people can't do you know. And we have the- we have
470 the woodworking or- they're actually building houses now and maybe they'll get a house that is
471 dilapidated and they'll go in and fix it up or they're kind of building houses and it doesn't get
472 done you know in one school year. It continues from year to year and then they sell it. And then
473 they have the auto-mechanics but I think they could offer a whole lot more than that too. You
474 know the other thing, I know of a school that actually had, I doubt they needed so much now, but
475 they had like a secretary thing where they actually did learn the short hand and the...(inaudible)
476 and things like that. I thought wow we should do that. Of course now um we don't, we used to
477 have Home Ed and they only have it at the middle school level now, they don't even have it at
478 the high school anymore. But look at all the people making money out there as chefs, you know
479 what I mean, and selling cookbooks, and who knows. And people got to work in restaurants too.

480 CN: That's right. I know, we need them. Um how would you describe the role education plays in
481 the Fort Scott community? (Time: 1:00)

482 TB: Um Education plays a pretty big role there. Um we also have a junior college so yeah uh our
483 junior college brings in kids from all over for sports actually, but, yeah I mean we get kids from
484 all over the United States for football, basketball, and baseball there- and rodeo yeah Janet just
485 reminded me of that and we have a- uh huh- yeah and I keep forgetting at the high school we
486 also have a big Ag group- we have agriculture classes- future farmers of America- I don't know
487 what they call it now. I think it's that still, but um that is really big and growing in our area. And
488 so our kids, if they are in the Ag program at high school, they know the Ag people at the college
489 too and they kind of go right on over to that uh whether it is rodeo or farming or meat judging,
490 they have all that. So yeah, and our kids can go there pretty much free. I mean the junior college
491 gives them some money, the high school gives them a little money- in our area we're pretty poor
492 so almost everybody who applies gets a Pell Grant- gets a government grant and scholarships-
493 you put all that together and you're not paying for the first two years of college you know. And
494 then they can move on to there, 30 miles down the road to Pittsburg State University. Again the
495 university gives scholarships and with grants and all um, free education. We have a teacher at
496 our high school now who said she didn't pay anything for her degree. Nothing, that's how she
497 got through college. Yeah and then we hire these people back you know for teaching. Yeah. Plus,
498 we do take in student teachers as you well know. I don't know where you went for students
499 teaching, but we take in a lot of student teachers for their you know...

500 CN: By taking- so the schools take in a lot of student teachers?

501 TB: Mhmm, at every grade level. Mostly they come from Pittsburg State because we're close
502 you know so we play a role in that part of education too. It's kind of like a teaching hospital,
503 we're teaching...(trails off)

504 CN: Ok so let's see. Reflecting on your own experiences, how has education evolved over the
505 years?

506 TB: How has it evolved? I see that they dropped classes, things they don't teach anymore. Um I
507 see that they've added because of technology. Um they've added some things. Um I see to that-
508 and maybe I didn't know it when I was a kid- but it's like you know they try programs that like-
509 we're going to really get into math and then oh wait English is suffering on their tests so we're
510 going to really throw us into English. And then the math drops- the math scores you know the
511 testing stuff drops. Or we're going to try a new way of teaching and now it's like um, key words-
512 like they want every classroom to be involved in. Um I don't know what it- you probably know
513 better than I do- having words up in the classroom that goes with that subject or you know. Also
514 they pay a lot more attention to-or they try- it's like the bullying thing you know- let's educate
515 on that and let's educate on this and that and then it kind of rolls around again uh where oops
516 we've been paying too much attention to that we've got to cut some of that out you know,
517 because another area is failing and- I think the teachers- they're kind of getting um- well like in
518 the music department- that doesn't pertain to them, a lot of the stuff that they're wanting them to
519 work on. Um the teaching styles you know doesn't pertain to them at all. Um but I do see that-
520 that seems to be a big deal you know teaching styles. And I think that, that's kind of silly to me
521 just because like every kid learns different, teachers teach different you know so you can't just
522 slot it into this oh we're all going to teach this way I don't know. I mean- I guess to answer your

523 question is- teachers in education, it's like they're constantly trying to educate the teachers to
524 teach and so what's happening with the kids? The teachers are being taught to teach, but are the
525 kids learning? You know, because if the teacher always has this hanging over their head, that
526 they have to use this style. And so now I see emails from all of them saying hey I found this
527 model that I am using and it worked pretty good and I found such and such and I'm
528 incorporating that into my classes you know and um I thought if you- and I know that some of
529 the teachers that I am around- that is their big deal, that selling themselves to the administration
530 by emailing that saying hey I've done this, hey I've done that, so I'm you know jumping through
531 all these hoops doing this kind of thing, but I don't know if they know what the kids learned
532 doing it, I don't know. But they did it, you know...(laughing) (Time: 1:07:55)

533 CN: Um what direction do you see education moving towards uh in your community and on a
534 national level?

535 TB: That's a tough one. Hmm. I see- well I see them always trying to improve you know. I can't
536 see that it is going to go down. They're improving. National level, well we have a new secretary
537 of education now, so I guess I'll just have to say I am not qualified to answer that question.

538 CN: Yeah. I am not either so- It will be interesting to see what happens. So, uh what hopes do
539 you have for education in the future?

540 TB: My hopes for education in the future, um for Fort Scott- well like what I was talking about is
541 uh letting kids- having kids see where they're best, you know what they do best. And what they
542 really, you know, want to do and if it's not college, if it's not getting a degree, then show them
543 other things, you know. And uh, I mean a lot of people- I would like to see them offer more uh
544 well like I said the trade schools, but with that business so that when they do learn these trades
545 they may open their own business and you have to know how to do that you know. And I'd kind
546 of like to see that happen. And then hire more people...(laughing) you know. I just don't want all
547 kids to feel like I can't do anything you know, why am I learning this? I get that but if they are in
548 a trade school, they know exactly why they're learning that and they can use it hopefully.

549 CN: And they enjoy that I'm sure too, that- if that's for them.

550 TB: Right, mhm. I'd like to see that.

551 CN: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to add?

552 TB: (sigh) I would really like college to be more affordable.

553 CN: Amen.

554 TB: I don't know how- yeah- I don't know how that can be, um, I guess that's probably the most
555 thing...(trails off)

556 CN: Uh huh, alright, well thank you so much!

557 TB: You're welcome! How long have we been on here? Is it enough time?

558 CN: Yeah, let's see I'll go ahead and pause this. (Time: 1:11:45)