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HARVEY E. STAHL
RETIRED SUPERINTENDENT
CLAYMONT SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Interviewed by:
John H. Gauger
July 20, 1966

Transcribed by:
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HARVEY E. STAHL

RETIRED SUPERINTENDENT, CLAYMONT SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1906-1910 Taught in rural one-room schools in Indiana for \$1.98 a day, grades 1-8

1914 Graduate of Indiana University

1918 Master's degree, Teachers' College of Columbia University

1919 Superintendent at Seaford, Delaware

1922 Director of Educational Research for State of Delaware

Charter member of Delaware State Education Association and Delaware Association of School Administrators

Delegate to World Federation of Education Association in 1937 at Tokyo and in 1939 at Buenos Aires

Charter member of Claymont Volunteer Fire Association

Director of Delaware Safety Council, The Children's Home of Claymont, and the Brandywine Branch, YMCA

Member of Claymont Lions Club and Masons

Twice on State Championship Badminton Doubles Team

1942 Citation from government for loan of his Japanese motion picture films to the government

1943 Received American Legion outstanding citizen of Brandywine Hundred

Vice-President, Claymont Savings and Loan Association

1955 Retired as Superintendent of Claymont District

HARVEY E. STAHL

This interview is with Mr. Harvey E. Stahl, retired superintendent of the Claymont Special School District.

Interviewer: Mr. Stahl, why did you enter the field of education?

Mr. Stahl: Well, I had as my ideal a very fine uncle whom I respected very highly. He talked to me when I was a boy very often; encouraged me to take up the profession he thought was a noble profession. I always had him as my ideal; therefore, I began to think about it even before I was through the elementary school. I was using him as my model. He lived to teach 30 years, and I thought as I was growing up and finishing the elementary and high school in Indiana that thirty years was almost eternity. I thought at that time if I ever did become a teacher that I would never achieve that goal. Well, I lived past that by 17 years; in other words, I finished 47 years of teaching, in the teaching profession, so I eclipsed his record. But that was the real reason I got into the teaching profession. But he was a teacher, and a very good one. A rural teacher, in Indiana. He never taught in any other than a one-room rural school. That was his ambition, and he followed that until he died,--or almost until he died--he retired from teaching. That's the reason I entered the teaching profession.

Interviewer: I believe you started out teaching in a one-room school?

Mr. Stahl: That's right, in Indiana. Many of my boys, not many of them, but a number of my boys and girls who went to school from the rural area in Indiana--Huntington County, Indiana--some of them were older than the teacher. I was just out of high school and had spent only 12 weeks in preparation beyond the high school in Valpariso University in Valpariso, Indiana, so I was very poorly prepared. However, I started teaching in the one-room rural school and continued in teaching in the rural schools. We had only six months of schooling then, in Indiana. Of course, we have more now; but I would get out early enough to go to Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, and take spring and summer courses. I did all of my college work at Indiana University, state university, by taking the two terms, spring and summer terms, and spent only two full years there to get my bachelor of arts degree. So that's the way I got through college. Of course, the standards for teaching now in Indiana are much higher. I couldn't do that today, but those were the conditions. And I felt the first year I was teaching that I learned a great deal more than the pupils. Do you know how much I received from compensation? It amounted to \$1.98 a day, and I believe that was more than I was worth.(laughter) That was just about \$40 a month. That was my first year of teaching--Clear Creek Township School in Huntington County, Indiana.

Interviewer: Well, how could you handle eight grades at one time?

Mr. Stahl: Well, I'll tell you, that is a long story. I got permission from the parents of the older children who came to

school after the farm work was laid aside, they called it. They came to school only a few months; therefore, they stayed in school until they were some 18, 19, 20 years of age. But my older pupils, when they did enter school late in the fall after the farm work was completed, I got permission from their parents to have school hours last till dark, which I often stayed till dark and worked with that group. It was not an easy task. Although, when you have nine grades, we called nine grades--eight grades plus the chart class----. The chart class later became the kindergarten, in later years. But I noticed that the younger children would listen often to the recitations, as we called them in those days, to the older children, and learn much from listening. So we, I guess, got along fairly well because we cooperated. All classes cooperated with each other--in teaching each other--and that was one of the compensations, I guess. But as I look back, I think I ought to have paid them \$1.98 a day rather than their paying me, because I don't think I was worth much with a high school education. Only six months--that's all I had of schooling for a year in those days. It's 8, 8-1/2, 9 months now, but that's all I had so I was handicapped from the very beginning. I had to overcome that in my college work, and it was a handicap. Furthermore, I came from a large family, six of us, six children, and father and mother lived on a farm, and the farm wasn't too productive. Therefore, they couldn't afford to pay for my schooling. I had to work my way part of the time through Indiana University. Of course, I would teach in the wintertime; and I would save a little and apply that to

my schooling. In the last year I spent only two full years in Indiana University getting my bachelor of arts degree. I borrowed a little money from my older brother and paid it back after I got out of college.

So I stayed in Indiana until the close of school in 1919. Then I was planning to return to Teachers' College, Columbia University, to work on my doctor degree. I had already received my master of arts degree at Columbia University in school administration and supervision, but I was going to go back to Teachers' College to work on my doctor degree. But just before time for the Teachers' College to convene in the fall of 1919, I received a telegram from then Commissioner of Education A. R. Spayd of Dover, Delaware. He was then our commissioner of education--that office became the state superintendent of schools later--the next year, in fact. I received this telegram stating that a new school code had recently been adopted by the Delaware State Legislature in Dover, and that this school code was considered a very great step forward in progressive education. Prior to that time Delaware ranked very low among the states of the union in its quality of education. So the new school code made conditions more stringent for superintendents to qualify for these special districts. They created special districts in----

Interviewer: Is that part of the code?

Mr. Stahl: That's right, it's part of the code. They were called special districts, and the special districts were the larger of the communities. That did not include Wilmington. Wilmington had their own school code and their own school laws

governing their own schools, but these other larger districts-- 13 scattered all over the state of Delaware--called special districts and so designated in the school code. Well, they needed six or eight school superintendents because the people who had occupied those positions the year before couldn't qualify under the new school code. They hadn't the educational qualifications. So, I happened to have my master's degree at the Teachers' College, so I received an urgent telegram to come. They were in desperate need of six or eight superintendents. This was in the month of August, and school was opening in September, 1919, under the new school code. But the new school code--we weren't sure when I came to Delaware--we weren't sure it would be considered constitutional by the State Supreme Court because the school code passed by one vote in the House, a margin of one vote in the House, and there was some element of doubt about whether it would be considered constitutional by the State Supreme Court. It was still pending. So I came to Dover and I said: "Well, I'll look over this situation." I'd been through Delaware, but never stopped here. I never stopped off on the train. So I came to Dover, went to see Mr. A. R. Spayd. It happened to be on Sunday, so I went to his home for an interview. He told me to come to his home. Well, he begged me to take one of these positions. I told him I knew nothing about Delaware. He named the six or eight different special districts that had no superintendents. The old ones couldn't qualify under the new code. Well, I said: "I don't know, you send me to one place that you think I'll fit in best." I had never met Mr. Spayd before, and he had

never met me before; but I had my credentials with me. He looked them over. He was desperate for filling these positions, because it was then about the middle of August and school opening was set for the first week in September. It was a hot, sultry August day; and I went to his home and had an interview with him. He sent me down to Seaford, Delaware; that's the southern part of the state, Sussex County. He thought I would like that place better. So he called up the Board members, and they met me at the train. That's the only transportation we had at that time between Wilmington and Seaford. So I went down by train, the Board met me there, and took me over to the school building there. It was an old, a very old, clapboard school building. The sides were clapboard walls, and I think it looked like Noah's Arc. Do you know how foul the odors are after you open an old school building that's been shut up, sealed almost, from the time school closed in the spring till fall. It stunk, that's all. It stunk to high heaven, it really did. Well, I got one whiff of that building, and I looked it over very carefully. I met with the Board, a short meeting, after going through that building; and I told them very kindly that I would go back to Dover and talk further with Mr. A. R. Spayd about this job. Well, I did. I told them that I would like to think about it for a few hours. So, I went back to Dover and talked to Mr. A. R. Spayd, Commissioner of Education, in his home. I told him of my experiences I had with the Board--a very fine Board of Education--very fine gentlemen--, but I said that building is impossible. It just had such foul odors I couldn't be happy in a building of that kind. It's not

modern. Well, he begged me to take it. But he excused himself from the room in which we were having this conference. He went into an adjoining room in his house. He said he wanted to do some telephoning. I didn't know to whom he wanted to telephone. I didn't know till later. He came back after a short time. He had talked to Mr. Pierre Samuel duPont. He was then vice-president of the State Board of Education, the new state board under this new code, to help to administer this new code, because it was not very popular among the people. In fact, they called it the damn school code. So many people called it that and were very antagonistic toward it. They weren't even sure at that time whether it would be declared constitutional by the State Supreme Court, but Mr. Spayd went on to say: "If you will take that job, Mr. Stahl, at Seaford, Mr. Pierre Samuel duPont will build a new school building in Seaford within the year or two; and furthermore, if you make good at this job, this new position, Mr. duPont will supplement your salary to the extent of \$500 in June at the close of the year." I said: "Well, that seems pretty good, that seems very fine." So I accepted under those conditions, and I went down there; and Mr. duPont I learned to know very well because of his being vice-president of the State Board of Education. He was a wonderful personality, interested, vitally and deeply, in better education. Oh, what a fine personality he was! You know he was the man who founded Longwood Gardens later. Well, I learned to admire him greatly. Well, to make a long story short, I struggled through the year the best I could; and in June, the last of June, here came his check for \$500 with

a note of appreciation for my services and for staying on the job. Now the Board took over that financial responsibility the next year. They didn't have time to include that \$500---- Now that isn't very much money now, but it was then. But that's the way I happened to come to Seaford.

Well, then I stayed in Seaford about 2-1/2 years. Then I became interested in a job in the state department of education. They called the job the state statistician, but it later became director of research. That was the title they gave to it later. My successor was called the director of research. Well, I didn't like that work too well, because I liked closer association with boys and girls; so I begged off of that job, and signed off at the end of six months, and came to Claymont. And that's the way I happened to come to Claymont, in late August of 1922, and remained as the superintendent of schools for 33 years. I retired on June 30, 1955. That brings it up to my retirement.(chuckle) Now I covered a lot of territory there, and I haven't said it too well, I don't think.

Interviewer: Tell me about the Claymont District when you first came to it.

Mr. Stahl: Well, the Claymont District when I first came to it was a disorganized community as far as schools were concerned. Claymont prior to 1922, about five or six years prior to 1922, started to become an industrial community. The big steel mills moved from Pennsylvania, and the General Chemical came in here, and Sun Oil Company came into this area. Those big industries, of course, necessarily brought in people to work into these big factories. A number of small communities developed in this

area that was formerly a rural community. There were only-- there was--well, the old stone school building, here the original school building built in 1805, served for 100 years as a one-room school. Then in 1905 they built a second room and that served until about 1917--prior to that--1914, when the industries first started to come in here. That second room added to the old stone school building is still standing over there. It is an antique building. It is really a landmark in the community. That served as two little rooms, the second room served until about 1914, nine or ten years, and then the industries came in here and they helped to build one, two, and three room school buildings to take care of their people. They had housing units built to house their employees. Overlook took care of the people who worked in the General Chemical plant, and Worthland, it was a little community, took care of the people who worked in the big steel mills. And then they had another village called Aniline Village that took care of the people who worked in the aniline industry. So we were a community, we went very rapidly from a rural community into an industrial community along the Delaware River here. So these industries built at their own expense these one, two, and three room school buildings, portable buildings, in their own communities where their housing developments took place. So I had eight separate buildings, small buildings, scattered all over the community. The Board of Education furnished me a Ford Coupe to get from one school to the other. It was too long a district, about 3 miles long and one-half to three-quarters of a mile wide--its irregular in shape, but that's approximately

the dimension--so the Board maintained a Ford for me, a car for me to transport myself to and from these schools. I had my office in the old stone school building that was built in 1805. So those one room and two and three room school buildings served until 1925, when we consolidated these school buildings and built our original Green Street school building. And then we all got into that one building and that served for only a few years, until we had to put on a north and south wing to the building in 1928, and in 1934, a west wing. So we added three different departments, you might say, or wings onto the original building because of the increase in population. Well then, of course, that one building served only for a few years, even with the three wings addition until about the early 50's when we started to build separate elementary schools. In other words, from the consolidated school we grew into a high school by taking the eighth grade graduates and keeping the ninth grade to tenth--it took four years to grow into a senior high school.

Interviewer: Before that, they went to Wilmington?

Mr. Stahl: Yes, they went to Wilmington High. We sent our boys and girls to Wilmington High School, the white boys and girls, and the colored went to Howard High School, which was then segregated of course; and we sent a few of our high school people to Alexis I. duPont School and paid the transportation. So 1952, when we started to build the elementary school buildings, and they built two other elementary school buildings since I retired; and they are now getting ready for a new building program that will build a separate senior high

school, and one additional elementary school building. We've grown to be a community of between 15,000 and 20,000. We don't know because it's not an incorporated community. We should be, but we're not. We're governed by the County Levy Court which is pretty far removed.

Interviewer: Do you think the new County government will encourage Claymont to incorporate?

Mr. Stahl: I don't know. Really I felt the need for incorporation many, many times. But, of course, the large industries here along the Delaware River--it's just a natural place for industries, and it's a suitable place for industries and other industries have come in neighboring communities, and it has grown by leaps and bounds. I think our county is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States during the last ten years they tell us. So, the schools have grown by leaps and bounds, I know that. And everything else, change has taken place. My goodness, when I started teaching in Seaford, you know what the salaries of teachers were? They varied between \$600 and \$800 a year; and my goodness, my salary was \$3,000 then, and I felt that I was rich. But, of course, they became higher and higher as we went along; and the salaries now, I guess, are fairly good. They are not too high yet. But, really, to see these changes take place right under your nose and to be a part of it, it's an interesting challenge. We were continually planning new school buildings to take care of our increasing population. Our growth has been very fast. As you know, the whole county has.

But in 1952, when the Court of Chancery decreed that we would do away with segregation in Claymont schools, our high that was the guinea pig school, and Hockessin school in Hockessin, Delaware, was the elementary school taken as examples for the whole state. And the Court of Chancery ruled and was sustained by the State Supreme Court that we would have to take the colored children. We had been sending them to Howard High School. We had only one elementary school for colored children. We had a separate school. It was built in 1922, and it went out of existence a short time after I retired, a couple years after I retired. And during that time we had only one colored teacher, and she had the grades one to six, and we sent 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, prior to 1952, we sent them to Howard High School; and they took care of them, and we paid the transportation. So that's the way we got integrated.

We were the first school here, high school, to be integrated. And I was privileged to be in court to testify about the quality of education in Claymont High School in contrast to Howard High School, and I thought they would cite me for contempt of court; but they didn't. They wanted me to say that our high school here was more efficient than Howard High School. I was, although seven miles away from Howard High School, I only had the opportunity of visiting it, I guess, only two or three times. I didn't know too much about their work so I couldn't, I wouldn't say it. And I thought the lawyer, the judge was going to cite me for contempt. I said: "I just don't know." And I didn't. They tried to get me to say, the

lawyer did, the colored lawyer did, that Claymont school was a better school than Howard High School. I didn't say it, and I wouldn't.

But I'll tell you frankly that was an interesting period to go through. I shall never forget it because some of my own peer group, that is school superintendents in Delaware, said to me the summer of 1952 when we were mandated by the Court of Chancery, sustained by the State Supreme Court, to take our own colored high school pupils into our white high school over here on Green Street, I had some of my own peer superintendents in Delaware at a state meeting in August in Dover--we generally have a meeting prior to the opening of school, a statewide meeting to discuss opening school plans--I had some of my superintendents say to me something like this: "Mr. Stahl, you're going to have race riots on your athletic field if you take these colored high school boys and girls." I said: "I don't think so." And this was my reason I gave. I said: "There are too many sensible people in both races to let that happen. I don't think it's going to happen. And furthermore, we have a wonderful teacher in the colored school who has taught all of these children sometime during the first six grades, and taught most of them through all of the six grades. She's a mother, like a mother to those children." She came to me after the court mandated us to take these colored pupils--I was willing to take them, I wasn't unwilling to take them at all, but the school code we had two systems of education, one for whites and one for colored;--but Mrs. Dyson said to me, said after she learned the action of the court, she said: "Mr.

Stahl, I want you to know if my boys and girls at any time give you or any of the teachers any trouble, all you need to do is telephone me or come to see me. I'll take it up not with them alone but with their parents. There will be no trouble!" She was just that emphatic. But here she is, a poor soul.

We went to New York City--this paper, the Tribune, put on a program--they invited us to go up to New York City to tell this story. And we did. She said she would go if I would go along and introduce her. She spoke to 2,000 people at Hunter College. Governor Dewey was then governor of the state of New York, she spoke on the same program proceeding her. All I did was introduce her briefly. This was a type of program, a citizenship program, that they put on every year; and they invited us to tell the Delaware story of integration. So we did. She said: "I'll go, if you'll go along and give me a little moral support and will introduce me." To make a long story short, I introduced her, and she, in a very simple language, captured that audience of 2,000 people, better and more pronounced applause she received than Governor Dewey. They stood and gave her a standing ovation. This simple story of how she was trying to prepare her boys and girls for integration in the schools below the Mason-Dixon line. That was making school history. Here's the writeup of that story.

Believe me, those were trying days because we didn't know what would happen. I felt sure that we could handle the situation. My faculty over here were sympathetic to the cause. They had a meeting after the court mandated us to take these colored children. They said: "We'll back the school board and

the administration 100 percent," and they just did that. We had no trouble. Oh, we had problems sure, but we have problems with white children every day. But we had no problems, and we didn't have. We just wouldn't have. But briefly that's the story of the integration of our schools. We were the pioneers in Delaware. And, of course, we have in other schools just getting started--down state--they were slower getting started---- My goodness, the down state people have a little different concept, although they are working out, slowly. It is an evolution rather than revolution. I don't know whether they could have done in school down below--in the lower part of the state without some serious problem. I don't know, I never will know. But we were determined we were going to make this work. The Board of Education was symphathetic, the faculty, the administration, this teacher was a tremendous help. We--rarely did we have to get in touch with her--but she'd check with those children. She lived up there in that district. Most of the pupils' parents of these pupils worked in the mills and some of them had worked for that same company for 30 years--pretty high class people, and they were very cooperative. We never had a bit of trouble, not one time.

Interviewer: Is she still teaching?

Mr. Stahl: She retired, she retired two years after I did, but she's still living, and a wonderful soul she is. She's still doing work. I think she has some classes for kindergarten up there in her school there. She's still working with church work in Wilmington and is a community worker.

But that to me is a very interesting experience that we had that dates back to 1952, 53, and 54. We've been called upon, both Mrs. Dyson and I have gone to other communities and told our story of how we made the integration program work in our own community without any fanfare, just quietly. We had no serious trouble. That is one of my, I think, one of my greatest achievements. That is, I didn't do it alone. I don't want to give that impression, but as I look back in my career in Delaware that is one of the high points--in making it work because so many people said it wouldn't. And a lot of them believed it. So I look back and that is one thing, one program, that we spent a lot of time on it, of course. But with the help of everybody concerned in the community, we were proud to say we had no serious difficulties. Now that's a long story, and I think I bored you.

Interviewer: It's been very interesting.

Mr. Stahl: I think I bored you. I don't know. I have had the good fortune of having good health in my whole teaching career. I never missed a day of teaching except two weeks when the doctor over here sent me home with the mumps. I thought I had had the mumps. He sent me home with the mumps. We had an epidemic in the school. The school doctor came over and was sending many kiddies home because they had mumps. I was rather provoked to think that it was playing havoc with our attendance. I came in to where the doctor was seated. He looked up and said: "Mr. Stahl, you go home." I said: "Doctor, don't kid me. I'm not in a humor to be kidded." He said: "Go to a mirror." Well, I didn't feel a thing. And lo and behold, I had the mumps on

one side. I did go home. I think I was out ten days and that was the only time in 47 years that I missed one school day. Of course, we were closed back in Indiana in 1918 when the flu epidemic was in. I don't count that, because the schools were all closed.

Interviewer: The flu epidemic was here in Delaware also.

Mr. Stahl: Yes. But I never missed any other days on account of illness. So that's a great blessing to have good health. I still have good health, and I enjoy a lot of things that I have been doing since I retired.

I've been spending most of my time now with the retired teachers organizations on local or county, I mean, and state and national levels. I have just returned last week from the NRTA Convention, that's the National Retired Teachers Association that had their summer convention in Minneapolis. I attended as an officer. I'm state director of Delaware, and Area II director of NRTA. That takes in four states of Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York State. So I went as an officer. We had a five-day convention. A very fine convention. Had a little trouble on account of the strike getting home. I'll tell you, we were stranded for a while in Minneapolis; but finally we took a train into Chicago. It was about an all day ride almost. We were able to charter a plane from a little line, Mohawk line, and took me to Kennedy airport. And from there, they sent three of us home by limonsine. Got home 2 o'clock on Sunday morning, the tenth of this month--tired and dirty; but we finally got home. We don't realize how slowly we travel after you are used to riding on the planes. It took

us four hours to get out there, and it took me a day, I guess a little over a day, to get back. I wasn't stranded as badly as some of them. I know some of them are still stranded and are having difficulties.

Interviewer: I think you were one of the charter members of the Delaware State Education Association?

Mr. Stahl: Yes. I was present when it was born and that was---- Well, we had an initial meeting late in 1918, late in the fall of 1918. We met at the Wesley Collegiate Institute, they called it then, in Dover. I guess there was about ten or twelve of there, principally school superintendents and a few teachers, but very few, and the state commissioner of education, Dr. A. R. Spayd, and Doctor Holloway, who was then county superintendent. He was brought back home to Delaware. He's a Delawarean. He was born at Selbyville and lived there most of his life until he went to Dover to be state superintendent. He first went to Dover as county superintendent. You know the county, under the new code which provided for three county superintendents of schools, Doctor Holloway was brought from Bordentown where he was school administrator--Bordentown, New Jersey--back to Delaware to serve as county superintendent in New Castle County. He was county superintendent for only a year. Mr. Spayd left the state at the end of one year of the school code; and believe me, that was a stormy year. Do you know that so many people were--looked upon the code as something awful--something impossible. They didn't think it would work, and they thought it was too big a step to take at one time. And the very fact that a lot of teachers couldn't qualify

and superintendents couldn't qualify for their positions, they had to scurry around and go to college to earn credits to qualify as teachers and as superintendents of schools and supervisors. And people were very, very unhappy about it.

In fact, Doctor Schilling tells this story. I've heard him tell it a number of times. He's dead now. He died with cancer just a couple of years ago. But he told this story. The first year of the code he would especially go down state. He went down to Georgetown and he thought at one time they were going to railride him out of Georgetown. He was invited to come down and talk about the school code, and its implications, you know, how the people would look upon it. He wanted to get the ill feeling to subside because they were very unfriendly. But the audience was so unfriendly that he thought he was going to be chased out of town. And that was true a number of places where the state superintendent or his assistants would go to PTA meetings. I'll tell you, it was a very strenuous year. And it was a very strenuous year starting school down to Seaford because the State Supreme Court didn't announce it's decision until after school opened. So Mr. Spayd said: "Don't order any books, don't order any supplies until you know whether this school code will stand." I didn't know if I had a job, even, if it didn't stand. But anyhow, the State Supreme Court sustained the school code, and then we ordered books. But how poorly prepared we were. Kiddies in Seaford school and all over the State of Delaware didn't have books. We had to entertain them the best we could until their school books came, the new books came. It took us a while to get them. We weren't

privileged to order them until we heard from the State Supreme Court. But the DSEA started in 1918, and the next year it----

Interviewer: Was that partly to encourage public support of the school code?

Mr. Stahl: Yes, yes. That's right. yes indeed. But it was very simple. The first program, I think, we met only one evening, and next year, I think, we met a longer period of time. Our program was scheduled the next year in Dover. I was the second president. (chuckle) And I know we met in the Methodist Church in Dover, and we had one day's program. The second year we had a day's program, and we had one program just a short program in the evening in 1918 when we organized. I was a charter member, and as far as I know now, there is only one other charter member living in the state, and that's Robert Schilling at Milford. He's been retired for a number of years and lives at Milford. He's John Schilling's brother. Did you ever meet him?

Interviewer: I never met Robert Schilling, no.

Mr. Stahl: But as far as I know, he's the only other charter member of DSEA. Well, I'll tell you we've come a long, long way. We didn't fill the auditorium at the Methodist Church the first year. Well, it became larger and larger. You know, when I came to Delaware there were, I guess, between 10 and 12 hundred teachers. And now in New Castle County there are many times more than that, in New Castle County alone. But I think there were between 1,000 and 1,200 teachers in the whole state of Delaware, and now in New Castle County, outside of Wilmington, there's more than that. I guess there's----

Interviewer: About 4,000, I know that.

Mr. Stahl: In the whole state, aren't there about 4,000?

Interviewer: I think so, yes.

Mr. Stahl: So we have seen tremendous changes. Most of those changes, I think, have been for the good. I sometimes think some of the changes were slow in coming, but we've made strides. I want to remain active in education as long as I live. So, last November DSEA made me honorary life member of DSEA; so, I don't need to join any more (chuckle). But I was a member every year. I kept up my membership since retirement up until this time. I've had very fine memories. I have had very fine memories. I've attended every session of the DSEA meeting. I've attended every one of them since I retired. I keep interested, and I expect to keep interested in education as long as I live. That's my life's work, and I enjoy it.

Interviewer: Well, if we could turn to some of the other things here in Claymont, I think you have been active in the community also; for instance, aren't you also a charter member of the Claymont Fire Company?

Mr. Stahl: Yes, I helped to organize the Claymont Fire Company in 1928, and they made me an honorary life member a few years ago, just four or five years ago.

Then I am also a charter member of our service club. I helped to organize the Claymont Lions Club; it's a service club. We do quite a many fine--give many fine services to the community. Since we are not incorporated, we assume some of the responsibilities of the City Fathers, I call them. But I helped to organize the Lions Club back in 1938 and am still a member.

They made me an honorary life member when it became time to retire in 1955.

Because of my interest in the integration of schools, the colored fraternity of Delaware--what is the name of it, the Alpha--I forget the name--made me a member.

Interviewer: The Alpha, (garbled), Alpha?

Mr. Stahl: Yes. It's colored. They cited me for this citizenship award in 1955.

But as I said, I'm interested deeply in community work. I'm serviceminded. As I said, most of my time now is taken up with Retired Teachers' Association. I helped to organize the Retired Teachers' Association in 1955 and 56, and I find that highly rewarding. In fact, I enjoy working with my peer group. These are retired teachers, and we are interested in their welfare; and we are interested in making their later years rewarding and meaningful and productive. In other words, we are interested in their general welfare. We are interested in improving their pension laws. Now this new pension law that just became a law this last session of the Delaware State Legislature provides pretty well for the teachers now in service. If they remain in service a certain number of years, they will receive twice the maximum pension that we people who have retired previously are now receiving. And that's where it should be.

Interviewer: But this won't affect you at all?

Mr. Stahl: No. This law doesn't. However, the Delaware State Legislature passed a bill recently to name a statewide commission, or committee, to study these all existing pension

laws with the idea of improving them and provided about, I think, \$25,000 or \$30,000 to pay for work or research study of that committee. I have already written to several people wanting to have our Retired Teachers' Association represented on that statewide committee because we've been working with these people almost daily. Some of them are having great difficulty on living on \$100 a month. That's the minimum pension, of course; I get \$250 and that's the maximum. Doctor Holloway who was our state superintendent of schools, just died about five months ago, he was state superintendent of schools, that's all he gets prior to this last law. So, this new pension law, I think, will serve the existing or active teachers very well. By paying a small sum over \$6,000--they pay only on the back salary that is over \$6,000, 5 percent; and I certainly recommend that the active teachers take advantage of it, because we're feeling the effect of inflation, now I'll tell you. Inflation is here and people on pension are the first ones to notice the increased cost of living, because they're on fixed incomes. So we would like very much to work for something better for the existing teachers. Now, of course, they'll die off slowly.

Interviewer: About how many members do you have?

Mr. Stahl: We have about 600 retired teachers. That takes in all school employees. But you see, the old law takes in other state workers. We always maintained that teaching was a profession, more so than some of these other state workers' jobs, and we'd like to have---- In fact, I worked for 40, almost 50 years now, for contributory type of pension. You

see, the state under my pension that I get now, I'm paid from appropriations made every year by the state legislature. I always wanted to pay in a little. I felt my pension would be a little more secure if I had a little equity in it. So I've worked with others for almost 50 years. It was not until 1945 that we had any pension in the State of Delaware. I, with others, worked very feverishly many years before we got that in 1945. So, I've seen some progress there, but we ought to really have a pension law that would have an escalation feature that would gear the pension to increased cost of living or inflation. That, I think, would be a great help. That seems to be the trend in other states now where the pension laws are being brought up to date. The trend seems to be placing in the law an escalation clause that after inflation goes up 3 or 5 percent, we ought to have an adjustment made. If it goes down they ought to be willing to take their loss gracefully and graciously. Now, that's what we are working on now.

Interviewer: Good.

Mr. Stahl: But as I said, it's slow business. It's extremely slow business. Well, I've talked around Robin Hood barn and (garbled) got incoherent.(chuckle)

Interviewer: I've one other question I wanted to ask you. I ran across something that intrigued me when I was reading about your career, and that is at the beginning of World War II you loaned some of your films of Japan to the government?

Mr. Stahl: Yes, I did. I'm glad you brought that up. I traveled to Japan in 1937. In fact, I met my present wife in Japan. I tease her, I say I hold that against the Japs (laughter).

She was traveling, we were traveling to Japan for the World Federation of Education Association which met in Toyoko that year. We went to Seattle and took one of the Dollar Line boats to Japan, and while we were there I took quite a few movies. That's one of my hobbies, I started back in 1931 with taking motion pictures, and I guess I have between 10 and 12 miles of films that I've taken in my travels. Well, I took about 3,000 feet of Kodachrome and a few black and white films. Kodachrome was just coming into general use then, and the colors were not quite as good as they are now so my colored films almost faded till where they are black and white, not quite. By anyhow, I took 3,000 feet of movies and almost got put in jail several times for taking pictures innocently, because while we were in Japan a number of Japanese soldiers were overrunning China in that Chinese war. They didn't call it a war, they called it a Chinese incident. Byt anyhow, Japan was just running wild in China. So, we saw in Japan preparation for war beyond what they needed in China. And I came home and talked about it. We saw them preparing tremendously for a war that didn't need much preparation, because China had practically no army. So they had no resistance there. But we saw soldiers on the streets in Japan everywhere, and it was quite evident to us that they were preparing for something in the future which panned out. They were preparing for something in the Pacific. We found out the hard way, in 1941, what happened in Honolulu. Well, I almost got put in jail twice by taking movies because I was taking movies of things that I thought were civilians, but they happened to be soldiers being conscripted

for service. They were marching down the street of a little village near Toyoko, and I started to take a picture. I saw them carrying banners; and I thought, in fact, that it was a funeral procession. So I started to take pictures with my movie camera. A Japanese young man came up and tapped me on the shoulder very vigorously. I turned around, and I knew only a few words Japanese, in the Japanese language, and he knew only a few words in English. It's pretty difficult to talk to people. Well, I'll tell you in a short time an angry mob surrounded me. He took my camera away from me, and my films, and I thought I was going to be taken to jail for a while. But pretty soon he had a bright idea, this young man who tapped me on the shoulder. He knew that I spoke English; and he couldn't understand me so he ran away for a while, but the angry mob was still surrounding me. I didn't know what was going to happen, but he came back pretty soon. He was out of breath almost, and he had somebody with him who could speak English. And the fellow he had with him asked me for my passport. Well, it was such a hot day I had changed clothing from----well, all of my clothing because of the perspiration, and I had left my passport back at the hotel, and I was in a predicament. I said I would take him back in the taxicab to show him that I had a passport, and I showed him other evidence that I was an American, told him that I came to Japan to attend this meeting of the World Federation of Education Association. Well, pretty soon he thought I was honest, I guess. Pretty soon he turned around and this fellow in Japanese language dispersed the angry mob. They went away and he gave me back my camera and my films

and told me to go back to the hotel where I was and get my passport. He wanted to see it. So I did. I brought it back, and he was satisfied with it. So he let me have my equipment and I was very happy because I had visions of going to jail. Well, I took these pictures----

That's only one episode I got into, I got into several others, innocently though. You could do that very easily because they were so zealous then. They didn't want anything to savor(?) the preparations. They didn't want that to get out. Our guide wouldn't even talk about it, our Japanese guides. They wouldn't even talk about the preparations, but we saw them. We saw preparations every place, every place we went, great preparation for war. So we came home, and I showed my pictures to different people and different groups all over the state and Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and I guess as far as Chicago. I think that's the farthest west I went with my pictures. So when the Pearl Harbor incident took place shortly thereafter, the Bureau of Strategic Information in Washington, D.C., sent me a telegram. It said come to Washington immediately. I didn't know what they wanted. So I went to Washington immediately. They said I understand you have some pictures taken just the year before--a little over a year before, I guess. I said yes. Well, he said, how many feet do you have and what kind of pictures. I told him. Well, he said, would you loan them to the Bureau of Strategic Information for the duration of the war. I said yes. Furthermore, I brought home about a half a bushel of literature. I said: "I don't know whether they are maps. Will they have any value?" He

said: "Cart them all together and send them in." Well I did with my films, and they kept them all during the war, and they never did tell me just whether they had been of any value to them or not. They wrote me a letter of thanks for use of them, so I don't know what use they made of them for they never did tell me.

Interviewer: They returned them all to you?

Mr. Stahl: Yes, they returned them all to me. I still show them occasionally, but the Kodachrome colors were not very fast. They're much better now. The quality is there now, and they will keep their color, but these faded a great deal. So I lent them to the government. I was glad to do that. I had postcards, and pictures, and maps. I carted them all together and sent them to the Bureau of Strategic Information in Washington.(chuckle)

END OF INTERVIEW