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INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY MARKERT
Newark, Delaware
August 1, 1972

INTERVIEWED BY: Myron Blackman

DM: D. Markert
MB: M. Blackman

DM: I grew up in Harrington, a small town, I suppose perhaps 4,000 or 5,000 population. It's a rural town, and I grew up in a little house right at the edge of town. We saw something that to me was very interesting. The farmers used to bring their milk in with the creamery. That's what we called it. I don't really know what it would be called, sort of like a milk repository. They brought their milk in, and it was processed, cooled, and I don't know what else might have been done with it, but then put in tank cars and--the railroad was right there--and taken to the city. And we enjoyed it because the farmers came in by horse and wagon. And they used to park all up and down our street. And we ran up and down and knew all the farmers and ran up and down and visited with them. And we were also the recipients of all sorts of stray animals that the farmers brought in for us. We used to run over to the milk place, and where they cooled the milk it ran down over pipes. And they would occasionally give us frozen milk off of them. Big deal, you know that was big amusement for us in a small town.

In the school system there was, well twelve grades in one school. And I suppose there might have been, oh, maybe twenty or twenty-five on the faculty. I don't really know. I went to the same school all my life, and it amazes me to think now that I have children in school who went to perhaps fifteen or twenty schools. And I just can't imagine that. I would have been so insecure, I think, having gone to one school all my life, I just couldn't see the change in it. And as kids, we spent all of our playtime devising amusements for ourselves. I can't remember going to the movies until I was about, I must have been twelve or fourteen years old before I can remember going to the movies.

DM: (Cont'd.)

And then at 35¢ a deal, you didn't go too often. The big thing in school was our sports program. We played basketball and baseball and soccer--no football. I had never seen a football game until I came to the University. We had ice skating, and it's a funny thing. It seems to me--it must just be my memory--but it seems to me that we had much more snow and severe winters than we have now. I can remember the snow piling up over the back fence, and I suppose the fence must have been maybe three or four feet high. And we walked on. . . . It froze, melted, and froze, and we walked on top of it. I can remember walking over it. I expect that's an unusual thing because I can remember just the one time, you know, it happened. And yet it seems to me that we did it often. But, as far as finances go, I don't really know. I know that Mother and Dad made a lot of sacrifices for us. I had two sisters older than I and a brother younger than myself. And there was just no question but what we were going to college. It was just the normal thing. Neither my mother nor father went to college, but they assumed that this was what we should do. And both of my sisters got what were called teaching scholarships; but, by the time I was ready to go to school, there were no such things. And I had no financial aid at all. And I know that it was not easy. I know the sister who was next to me helped with my finances. And at one time I borrowed money--no, it wasn't really a borrow, it was sort of a delayed payment. I've forgotten when it was, sometime in my senior year. They allowed me to pay some sort of fee later. I can remember that because I was so embarrassed that I should have to go and ask that. But apparently they just didn't have the money handy at the time although we managed. I never had any feeling of deprivation. Others at school had more than I had, particularly in the way of clothes. But it didn't bother me because there were others who were in the same fix that I was too. But I'm sure that my mother and father went without a good bit in order to put all four of us through college. And when I think of what it costs now, I doubt whether they could have made it. We didn't talk finances over in the family, and I just know that I went to school and my bills were paid and I had a certain amount of money that I could spend for myself. I had a checking account. That was the first time I'd ever had a checking account, and I felt I was a big deal, you know. I had a small amount in it. I went to the University; from my class at school, I think perhaps I was the only one out of a class of maybe 35 or so who went on to college. The others, some of them went into nurses' training, and one or two of them went into business. But it just wasn't the thing.

DM: (Cont'd.)

As far as I know, none of the boys went to school, went on to school. When I came to the University, I felt sort of like a fish out of water to begin with. But I enjoyed it very much; I enjoyed every bit of it. And I apparently made out all right because I think in my freshman year I again went on student council. And I got involved in school activities right away. We went on hikes with the "Y," and I was in the music--I couldn't sing. I liked the group's work, and they allowed me. . . I'm sure they allowed me to be in the choir just because I was willing to come to all the practices and learn all the songs and whatnot. But I really didn't have the, you know, enough. . . I couldn't read music, and most of the people could. But they allowed me to participate in the choruses. And I belonged to the math club and the science club, and anything that I could get into I did join. So I enjoyed that part of school. And I can recall what a big hit I made with my teachers in high school because I had written to one of my friends. It never occurred to me that she would broadcast it around school, but I said, "If they taught me anything in high school to prepare me for college, I didn't know what it was." Isn't that an awful thing to say? And I felt very inadequate because I'd never written a theme for example. And we had to write a theme once a week in freshman English. And actually I think I was being a little unfair because I couldn't have made out. . . I made out all right academically, and I could not have if I hadn't had an adequate background. But I suppose there were things that I felt uneasy about and it was very easy to blame them instead of taking some of the blame myself. But we had--I can't remember how wide a geographic area was represented--but I know we had girls from New York and from the South, Virginia, but most of them were in this area, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware.

MB: At that time, wasn't the University divided?

DM: I'm sorry.

MB: The University was divided?

DM: Yes, there was a women's college and a men's college, and never the twain should meet. We stayed down at our end of the college for classes and went to the library ostensibly to study but mostly to meet with the boys. And when you had a date, the big thing was the movies. And there was an ice cream parlor right alongside it. And that was the. . . That's all there was to do. People didn't have cars. You didn't travel very much. The only people who were allowed

DM: (Cont'd.)

cars were the commuters. I suppose I'm just sort of guessing, but I imagine maybe about 20 or 30% of our class--I suppose there were about 100 in the class--were commuters. And we got to know them very well. In fact, we knew everybody on campus. There were only 300 in the women's college and about 500 in the men's college. And, of those 300, it didn't take you long to learn the people in your own classes. And you very quickly, over a course of four years, learned the number of people. It was a very close knit group; you knew the faculty. They lived on campus, stayed in the dormitories; and, if you had any problems, you felt very free to go in to talk with your faculty. If you had a particular advisor or if there was just somebody that you related to, or if there was somebody you liked particularly. Now I say that they lived on campus. These were women faculty members. The men faculty members, I doubt very much that they stayed on campus. I don't really remember, but I know that some of the married couples certainly must have lived off campus.

There were not too many occupations that women could go into. I only knew of teaching and nursing. I'm sure there were others, but those were the only things that I knew, and office work for girls. And I just had no idea of anything else I might do. So I started out with the idea of teaching. And after I had been in school for a year with elementary education, I wasn't very much interested in the subject content. I didn't think it was very challenging so I changed my major to secondary education. In my sophomore year, having sat through the education courses, I didn't find them very interesting so then I decided to change to arts and science. And I majored in. . . Well, I didn't really know whether I was going to major in math or chemistry. And so I had, at the end of my junior year, had to decide on a major either in math or chemistry. And I had no idea. I was equally interested in them and had no idea of educational opportunities in either one of them. So it was a matter of taking a history of either math or chemistry and I decided to take a history of math course. And that made me a math major instead of chemistry major. When I was graduated, jobs were hard to come by. And, at that time, I would have gone into anything; I would have gotten any job at all. And there were very few teaching jobs. I went only on one interview, and that was out at Christiana, a little country school, an eight-grade school. And there were three of us who went out there for an interview. They even transported us from the college out there. And I had sent out any number of letters for interviews, applying for jobs, but that's the only one that I can recall being called for. And we didn't know anything about it. They did not notify us of any selection so during--I don't recall when it was--but later on then I went into the. . . I was called into the Du Pont Company for an interview. And this was the first

DM: (Cont'd.)

time I'd ever seen a business office that size. And I walked into the room, into the Statistical Department, which was the place I was interested in. And I walked into that room, and I looked through that and saw those rows and rows of desks; and it scared the life out of me. Well, as I say, I would have taken any job, though; it wouldn't have made any difference. But, when I went home in June, I had no job. And not many of my classmates had jobs either. But during the summer I got a notice that the teaching job at Christiana was open for me. And the day after I got that notice, I got a telegram from the Du Pont Company hiring me as a statistician. But I'd already. . . Well, I say the day after. I'd signed the contract and returned it so. . . At that time you just didn't break contracts either. I had no reason to; I would not have thought. . . But I mean, having signed for this teaching, it never occurred to me to go into anything else. I've often wondered what would have happened, you know, if it had been just one day the other way on that. But I started in teaching then at this eight-grade school, and I taught seventh and eighth grade. And I taught math, which pleased me; and I taught science. And they had no equipment at all. I gathered all the equipment and had a lab table built and a little Sterno stove for heat. And I got all my supplies at the drugstore. I was scared to death almost every time I did an experiment because I wasn't sure whether it was going to work or not. I taught spelling and literature and physical education and music. You wonder what the other teacher--there were two of us who taught seventh and eighth grade. Well, the other teacher was the teaching principal; and she taught eighth-grade English and social studies and then of course had the supervisory job, too. I got such a big kick out of teaching the physical education. I was not really that adept at physical education. I liked it; I played on a hockey team at school. This was intramural, of course. But I just didn't have the skills. But, I got such a big kick out of teaching those kids. They had never had any organized games of that sort, and to teach them. . . I taught them to play soccer and baseball. We had teams. Same with the music. They had not had any organized music classes. I was the world's worst at that, ha, ha. But we had music classes regardless. Well, I taught there until December, at the end of December. And then there was an opening in Newark. There had been an opening earlier in the year, and they had contacted me about that, about a month or so after school started I guess. And they had said that I could come in then, but I had a friend who I had gone to school with--in high school--and she had been out of school a whole year and hadn't been able to get a teaching job. And they were considering her for that job too. Well, I figured I had a job and she didn't. And, you know, it was only fair. So she took the opening that had come up earlier. Well, when this opening came up in January, it wouldn't have occurred to

DM: (Cont'd.)

me to change. And I think now, I wonder about the ethics of it. It didn't occur to me at that time. They couldn't approach you directly so they got one of the math professors at the University to talk to me about changing jobs. And it would be straight mathematics and more opportunity to do what I should be doing in math. And so I decided to make the change and I came into Newark then in January and finished out all my teaching--thirty some years--at Newark schools.

NB: What was Newark like?

DM: Huh? Well, at that time the town was a little university town. When you walked down the street, you knew everybody. And the kids were just as friendly as they could be. They were very anxious to make themselves known to their teachers. If you walked down the street and a child saw you on the other side of the street, he'd yell the minute he saw you, girls and boys too. Now I can walk the streets of Newark and I feel like I don't know anybody. And often the children will avoid trying to speak to you. But then it was just a different way. But it was a small town, very quiet. And the only thing. . . The University was the big thing, that and the paper mills; the two paper mills were the things that kept most people employed, I guess. The job I went into was straight mathematics, and I know how scared I was when I walked into that building and saw a corridor that was to me just about half a city block long. I'd gone to a small school, and the school I'd been teaching in was pretty small. I did my student teaching in Wilmington, in the city school. But this didn't seem like the same thing, being on my own for the first time. But the children were very helpful. Coming in the middle of the year wasn't as easy as it might have been, and I sort of threw myself on their mercy and said that I'd need a lot of help from them. And I can't remember a happier time than my teaching them; they really did. They went out of their way to help me get adjusted and to know how to fit in. I don't know how large the school was; I think the graduating class probably had about 70 in it which was huge to me. The grades 3 through 12 were all in one building--either 3 or 4 through 12--were in one building. The principal, the superintendent, had his office in the same building. And I think this has colored my feeling toward administration a great deal because I got used to being close to the administration. You saw the superintendent every day; he ate lunch with you. And you felt that his problems were yours and yours were his. I think this is a different attitude from the way people see administration now. I've always felt like they would do. . . Whatever they did, they were doing because it was best for

DM: (Cont'd.)

the teachers. It was the best that they could do for the teachers, and I never looked on it with suspicion. And it sort of shocks me to hear people be so suspicious and critical of administration as they are now. Change in time, of course. But there were forty some on the faculty--thirty-five or forty--I guess, on the faculty. And that was, as I say, the whole faculty. We had a very close relationship with the children and were very much interested in everything they did. When they gave a play, everybody went. You never thought of missing. If they had a concert. . . . If the band put on a concert, everybody, all the faculty, went. You didn't miss anything. And the same way with PTA's. Everybody came to PTA. It was just an accepted thing. I lived in a house right next to the school, a boarding house, and I had my meals there. I say that especially because there were, oh, six other teachers, I guess, who came in for meals. There were just three of us who lived there, but the others came in for meals. And we discussed all the problems of the school and settled half the things that had to be decided right there. When we played games, we went to all the games, the basketball games, away games and home. And you felt a very strong school spirit. I taught for six years, I guess it was, before the war started. And during the war we had, of course, victory gardens and scrap drives. And the children, various ones were called into service. And, as they came back telling about what they had seen, I got interested myself in the service; and I enlisted in the WAC's. I don't know whether you'd be interested in this or not, but my mother thought she was disgraced when I enlisted in the service. They didn't know about. . . . My parents at this time were up in northwestern Pennsylvania, and I just wrote to them and told them that I had enlisted. And my mother thought that she couldn't hold her head up because at that time the papers were full of a shipload of WAC's being sent home from Europe pregnant. And she thought I was going to the dogs, you know, having enlisted. I went down to Fort Benny (?). . . .

MB: You said that the students came back and talked to you about the service?

DM: Yes.

MB: And you were interested in. . . ?

DM: I was interested that when they told me about their life and what they did and how they lived, I just could not see how people with as many different interests and backgrounds could live together and work together. And I just couldn't see how

DM: (Cont'd.)

they could weld them together in a unit and get anything done. I was just curious as to the way of life. And this was the thing really that prompted me to enlist in the service. I suppose maybe I was ready to make a change. When I started out teaching I had the idea that I would teach two years in a place and then go someplace else. I was going to work my way through the United States by teaching. But, after having taught here six years, maybe I got the wanderlust. But I enlisted with the idea that I was going to find out for myself. Now I could have gone in for Officer Candidate School because college graduates were eligible for Officer Candidate. But I wasn't interested in that. I was interested in the foot soldier, the barracks life, and how things, what it was really like being out among the troops. So this was what I had done. I enlisted in the spring and was called into service during the summer. And I took my training down in Fort Oglethorpe (?), Georgia, the hottest place in August. It was as hot as it could be. And I had a very, very interesting experiences all along. It was just all new to me. When we finished there I was assigned to a machine records unit in Dallas, Texas; and I spent two years there. And, if I had had any ambition at all, I could have gotten into IBM work. I just wasn't farseeing enough. It was the same way several times when they asked about going to Officer Candidate School. I just wouldn't make the change. And I did some teaching in our detachment. We had, oh, certain. . . Well, we had requirements for training that had to be done. And I was given the assignment of giving news, keeping the detachment up to date on what was going on--news commentator, Walter Cronkite; I guess that's what it was on that, that sort of thing. It was the same way with the machine records. My supervisor, a fellow, had said to me if I would learn various parts of the job that he was sure I could move along in supervisory work. And again I wasn't interested in getting up. He was a staff sergeant, and he said I could move up very quickly. But I wasn't interested in any responsibility at all. I just sort of sat, and I did what I was told. Something else I learned in the army. I learned lots of things, but one of the things I learned was to be efficient. Up to that time I'd just done things; I'd never thought of trying to be efficient with it. And one time Shelly came by and saw me doing some work. I was doing some coding work, and he said to me, "If you would place your material here and your forms here and do such and such, it would save an awful lot of time." That was the first time I ever thought of trying to be efficient. I had no experience in a business world at all. And I think this was one thing that helped me a lot in my teaching afterwards. I got out, back into teaching,

DM: (Cont'd.)

and I had a business attitude toward it. I had worked in a business office for three years, and I learned a lot about keeping my desk in order and about keeping supplies-- things that made the job easy for you. Like planning ahead and thinking a little bit, one of the _____.

MB: What is the secret of getting all those people together from different. . .?

DM: I don't think there's any secret. What I learned--and again I think it was something that helped me a lot in teaching--was to value people for themselves and not for the way they sounded or what they look like on the surface. There was a little blonde girl in my outfit. She was a peroxide blonde, and she was as cute as she could be. But she sounded as tough as nails. I'd never heard anybody talk the way she talked. I'd never heard anybody. I wasn't used to hearing swearing. And she couldn't say a sentence without swearing. And yet she was one of the best-natured girls. It was just the way that she had been brought up. It was the language that she was used to using, and her swear words meant no more to her than the mild little words that I was used to using. And I think that's about the biggest thing I learned. That people's actions were what you judged them by; the way they talked, that didn't mean anything. And that helped me an awful lot with kids when I got back into teaching. I was not nearly so shocked and horrified at the language they used. I didn't realize how sheltered my life had been until I got out into the army and saw a little bit of life in the raw, ha, ha. And I spent two years in Dallas and then went for overseas training and then went to. . . I thought we were going to the South Pacific, but instead we went to Europe.

MB: _____ (question inaudible)

DM: This was. . . The war was over in Europe, but it was still on in the South Pacific. I was in Paris when the war ended in the South Pacific. But I don't really think there's any secret to getting people together. But we had. . . We had some people in our outfit who were very good at seeing the funny side of things. And I think that's the thing that helped us get along. I can't remember any conflicts that we had. We had a small detachment; there were only 100 in our detachment. And we were the first WAC's to come into this area and the first ones to work in this particular mess unit. So we were pioneers all along. We had a wonderful mess hall.

MB: Could it have been the war situation?

DM: Well, I'm sure that people all worked together. And when I spoke of the students asking me about the war, the thing that I can remember that seems so different from the way things are now is that everybody wanted to help. You know, there was a feeling of a common purpose. And that certainly isn't true now. I think, you know, people are so divided about whether we should be fighting or not. But everybody, there was no question. I don't know of anybody who didn't think we should be fighting and who wasn't working, either more industries or doing something in whatever way they could to help the war, help the war effort one way or another. So I'm sure a lot of these people--the young girls particularly--I was 28 I think when I went in the service, yeah, I was 28. A lot of these were kids who were 19 or 20 years old. And I expect that a lot of them were in with the idea that they were relieving soldiers for overseas duty. I didn't go with that idea. But they thought, you know, that they were making their effort that way.

MB: _____ (question inaudible)

DM: Yes, I was interested to go anywhere. At that time people didn't travel as easily as they do now. And to make a trip to Europe was a big deal. And I went over on a troop ship, of course. And after I got over there I said I was going to stay because I'm not a sailor; and I said, unless they built a bridge back, I wasn't coming back, ha, ha. But when it was time to come, I was ready to come home. Of course, you can't really say what Europe was like. I was in Paris, and they had German occupation. And you could see the bombing, the results of the bombing. And I worked in a, well, it was a marble mansion. It was machine records' headquarters. But it was in a house. And the wallpaper was--it wasn't wallpaper, it was satin covering--and there were marble fireplaces and the floors were marble. And then we had these makeshift desks and things set all around the place. And we lived in. . . It was not the George V Hotel, which is a very well known hotel, but it was one right alongside it. It was a parent. . . The two hotels were connected--run by the same management. And it was very ornate living quarters. But we had cots in there. The beds were in there, but we had extra cots in there, G.I. cots. And the same way with the food. It was not. . . I was a perfect candidate for overseas because I have little sense of taste or smell for army, I guess, not just overseas. Dehydrated food didn't make a bit of difference to me. It tasted perfectly all right. It didn't bother me a bit on that. And my work was very similar to what I had done in the States. It was a different outfit, a different unit, but we. . .

MB: What is machine records?

DM: Well they are IBM records, and they kept the strength. . . The tabs on the. . . Each person has, of course, a serial number and he's assigned a certain place. And you know where he is all the time. These records are kept there. And if a person is sent from one place to another, it has to be reported. Each outfit has a morning report. And every morning they have to account for how many people they have. And if they have anybody new come in, he has to be listed with his serial number; and this all goes to headquarters. It's just an accounting procedure. And overseas I was keeping account of the people who were overseas. And I got the biggest kick out of sitting at the telephone and calling all over Europe. I called Vienna and London, well just all, every place that we had troops. I called them, you know, to get their strength reports every so often. And then we made up a cablegram and sent it back to the Pentagon to give the account of. . . And I always had the feeling that I was going to initiate something special. We had cases of fellows coming back to the States here on temporary duty and being discharged here, and somehow or other the record got fouled up. And I was sure at the end of the war we were either going to end up with people thinking on paper that we had troops in Europe when they weren't. Or else he was going to have them home and think we had them over there. I knew something was fouled up about it, but I never was able to straighten it out. I knew there was something wrong with the accounting procedure. What happened was that the fellow who was in charge of our outfit was sick and went to the hospital. And then the one who took over told what he knew about it, but he didn't know the whole detail. And then the next one came along, and he didn't do even less. And they were being transferred home all the time, and I felt every time somebody new came in we knew less about what was going on. I worked in Paris, lived at the hotel for, I guess it was about four or five months. And during that time we had one day off a week. And I spent my time going around Paris. The only time I got out of Paris I went down to Versailles one time on a trip. But, other than that, I spent all my free time sightseeing in Paris. But when our headquarters were transferred to Frankfurt-- Eisenhower's headquarters then were transferred and our unit went with them. And there we lived in an apartment house on the outskirts of Frankfurt. I've often wondered how they ever got the furniture in that place. It was the biggest furniture I've ever seen. This is what I think of when they say German characteristics; I think solid, you know, heavy pieces of furniture. I think they must have built the apartment house around them. But I took a trolley car into town. And Frankfurt was just about bombed out. There was very little standing of the business (?). It seemed to me when I went around and saw the desolation, it seemed to me it would be easier to just level it and go build a city some place else, but they didn't. They built it back there. And we were. . . This was during the winter; it was not too comfortable. I

DM: (Cont'd.)

worked more than once in my overcoat. It was cold enough in the office that we just couldn't do anything unless you wore an overcoat. And again I can't remember anything about food. It didn't make much difference to me. We had adequate food, and I know that the fellows who worked in our office often asked to come down to our mess because they thought that we had a better mess. But by the same token I used to go over and eat in their mess at lunchtime. And I couldn't see any difference in the food at all so I think it was just, you know, the idea of making a change on it. When I was in Frankfurt I did get a furlough and went to Copenhagen so that was my little bit of traveling. And then when I came back here, I felt like a fish out of water. It seemed to me like I had no small talk; I didn't have anything to talk to the girls with. And things that had gone on here I felt like I just couldn't catch up with. The songs that they were singing were different. Frank Sinatra, I'd never heard of him. And the radio programs were all changed. I felt like I'd just never get caught up on things. And it was some time I think before I really felt comfortable in the normal situation, a normal social situation. When I came back I went right into teaching again and found that the school was a little bit different. We had a new principal, and we had lost a number of our faculty. And I felt, instead of being one of the crowd, I was a new person coming in. At that time we didn't have too much turnover in faculty. If you lost out of your. . . Out of our faculty of forty, if we lost one or two persons a year, that was the normal thing. And I went back as a floating teacher. My job, of course, they couldn't hold open; somebody else had taken over. But they were obligated to take you on if they could, and they gave me a job teaching introduction to business. And that was an interesting thing for me, too. I learned a lot, as much as the kids did, I know. But I went from room to room, and that was an experience, too. It's something every teacher ought to do. It gives you a little bit more understanding of the problems that the children have. And also a little bit more feeling of getting along with people. When you have to teach in somebody else's room, you know, you have to be conscious of them too. I taught a year and then stopped and went to get my master's. And I went to the University of Penn. And I was interested in guidance. And the only reason I really didn't intend to go into counseling, but I had gone to summer school one year and taken a course in homeroom. And I thought it was very interesting; there were a lot of possibilities and things that we knew little about. So this was my idea of going into guidance to learn more for myself, to make me a better teacher. And my principal was also going to Penn, and he happened to see me up there one time. He didn't even know I was planning to do this. And he's the one who got me started

DM: (Cont'd.)

with the idea that I was going to come back as a counselor. I had no idea of being a counselor. But when I came back, I was Newark High School's counseling department, guidance department. And I worked at that for about five years. It was new, and I set up the vocational counseling. That was the main thing; then I did very little testing. I think what I'm doing is telling you more of my personal experiences instead of what you were interested in.

MB: _____ (inaudible) _____

DM: I mean I'm, you know, thinking of things that are interesting to me and they're just little things, not really. . .

MB: Well, I'm curious about the changes in the school and the children, you know, through the years.

DM: Well, at that time, the school was starting to expand. And I don't know what the population was then, but Newark High School was going to be built. And the high school then, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades were to move over there. And, at that time, then I was counseling--we had 1100 students--and I just worked day and night. And I didn't have the knack for getting people to work with me to do what I wanted done the way I wanted it. I either told them too much or not enough. And I ended up trying to do too much myself so I figured I'd better get back. . . And I also had kept one class because I figured that I wanted to go back into teaching sometime. So, when Newark made the split, I went back in the classroom teaching. And I said here I had been counseling 1100 students, and when they went over to the high school they got two counselors for the--I don't know how many they had over then but it wasn't anywhere near 1100. I thought what an easy thing it would have been to have gone on with the counseling. But I went back into teaching, and I stayed there ever since. But I was teaching in a junior high school then. The thing I can notice, we had activities and the kids were very much interested in them. We had a pretty good participation in them. When I say that, I mean clubs. The children had decided on the things that they were interested in. And then they managed to find sponsors among the faculty. And we had a very good participation in that. In time though, it became a kind of mechanical thing, I think, and people were probably assigned to sponsor clubs in which they had no interest because the kids wanted them. And it just has sort of gone by the board. They don't do anything of that sort now. They have the activities after school. And here I, again, I think I probably am too harsh on this, but it seems to me now that teachers think, "What am I going to get paid for?", you know, "Why should I do this if I'm not getting paid for it?" And

DM: (Cont'd.)

it's the same way with the activities after school. The teachers who stay after school for these activities don't get paid for it. And they say, "Why should I do it when the others can go home, you know, and they have no responsibility?" And it sort of bothers me that there seems to be a dollar and cents tag on so many things.

MB: Can you see any reason why?

DM: I think that the reason is that teaching has. . . People are thinking of teaching in lines of other occupations where this is so, where you don't do anything unless you get paid for it. You don't do it because of the interest particularly. In a business office you do what you're told to do, and you don't do much beyond that. And when you go home at the end of the day, you don't expect to take any work home to do at night unless you're in a supervisory position. And then you might take home something. But I think that people have gotten away from the idea that teaching was sort of a. . . You did it for the love of it. And it's just a regular job like any other job now. And I'm sure that the young people who go into teaching had the same feeling for the people, the young people, that the ones did when I started. But I think they're much more conscious of the dollars and cents. It is this sort of thing. We, this year, wanted to go around in our school, wanted our math faculty to go around to various schools and visit and come back with some ideas. And one of the young fellows said, "I'll go if you pay my transportation." Now, nobody else would have thought of that. But he's not going to spend his money and use his car to go for something that would, you know, it just didn't occur to him that this is the way it should be. I shouldn't say the way it should be, but the way it had been.

MB: I'm just wondering if other changes _____ possibly the rising school population.

DM: Uh. The increased numbers? I don't think so. I say, to me, it's a change in attitude about. . . It isn't just in teaching; I think it's in everything. It's just a different attitude that they have towards it. I'm thinking of this sort of thing. When you had a plumber come to the house, he used to do a good job, and he took pride in his work. And I have the feeling now that he just comes and does the job as quickly as he can. I don't think he really cares whether he does a good job or not. I think, and again

DM: (Cont'd.)

I may be oversimplifying, I think back on my father. He was in the signal department of the railroad company, the Pennsylvania Railroad. And he had a very personal attitude toward the--well, again, he was in supervisory work--and this is probably why he felt that way. But this was the sort of thing that I had seen. That he felt a very personal obligation to doing a job well and seeing that his men performed well. And the fellows all worked the same way. They didn't fuss about restrictions that were put on them or what they were required to do. And this is the sort of thing that I'm just sort of aghast at. When teachers. . . . When we have faculty meetings, you know, and somebody will put up an objection to something. And I think that's a point well taken. There isn't any reason why it shouldn't be so. But it never occurred to me to object to anything of that sort. I think I'm just about thirty years behind the times. I just haven't changed with the times.

MB: I think the. . . . It seems to me, I know from teaching in New York, the largeness of the thing, the growing impersonality. When you spoke of being with the supervisor constantly. Today we're not.

DM: I think this is true. You're right about this. Our administration is down on Main Street. And most of the teachers have no idea who the superintendent--well, they know who he is--but as far as feeling any personal relationship with him, they don't. And I think there is really sort of an armed camp (?). You have the feeling, you know, like they're sitting there and the teachers are sitting here. I know when the funds were cut this year, they asked the teachers for suggestions about what we thought we could do for substitutes. And the teachers came up with the idea, "Let the supervisors come in and do some substitute teaching." And so the supervisors. . . . Well their feeling is that they have no work. . . . They really think that they don't do a job that's worthwhile because if they didn't feel this, they'd know that they had a job that had to be done and they couldn't come down and do substitute work. And this, I think, was showing the lack of communication there. But, well, you don't even have to go that far. I was teaching at Newark High School for the last two years, having been over at Central for however many years. And I would go for weeks without seeing the principal of the high school. There were four vice principals, and I didn't even know where the principal's office was. I knew where it was, in the general area; but I had not been in his office. The first year. . . . I was there a whole year without even knowing where it was. And the second year, a good part of it, before

DM: (Cont'd.)

I was in the main part and actually went back in his office to see what it was like. I was just curious one day and thought I'd walk back to see what it was like. But I saw him in the hall; I talked with him occasionally. But I felt very little personal relationship. And, you know, everybody likes to be recognized if they've done a job well. And I think. . . I always had the feeling that nobody knew what was going on--what I did in my classroom. Now, they say that the answer to that is that if you're not doing an adequate job, they'd find out about it soon enough. And then you'd know about it. But my feeling is I've always. . . This is the big thing that I've asked for all along when they'd ask for suggestions is that I think there should be more supervision. I don't think. . . It doesn't make any difference how long you've taught, you get into bad habits and you can always learn something. And I haven't been supervised. . . Nobody has come into my classroom for supervision for I expect maybe fifteen years. We used to have a state superintendent, and he came around and visited your class at least once a year and sometimes oftener than that. And how he did it I don't know, but he did. But this year, for the first time, I had a vice principal come in to observe me; and he was _____ and it was required by the regulations to observe me. I think he was supposed to do it twice, but he came in only once. And then he had a conference with me to go over. . . And that's the first time this has happened to me.

NB: I know in my first year of teaching I had to ask for someone to come in so the chairman of my department could tell me how I was doing.

DM: Well, we have a chairman of the department; but he didn't do any supervision. And I think this is a matter of making you feel a part of things. I never minded supervision. I think there are some teachers who don't like to be supervised. I don't think it's because they aren't doing right, you know, they aren't doing a good job teaching. I think they're just uneasy about having someone come in. But it has never bothered me, and this is probably a reason, one of the reasons I think it would be good. I just have a feeling that we can't keep tabs on things, and I also have the feeling that. . . I know as a teaching technique anytime you could say something good to a child, if you could praise him in some way, you got a little bit more from him. And I'm sure the same thing would happen with teachers. I'm sure I would have felt like doing a little bit more if I had felt

DM: (Cont'd.)

that somebody was appreciating the efforts that I was putting into it. But I often felt that I could go in and probably not teach all day long, and nobody would have known or cared anything at all about it. I think quite different. The same way with the children. I think that. . . I thought this might be the fact that the older you get, the less likely you are to establish a good rapport with the children. I guess it's just the age difference. But I have felt as years have gone on that often the students just looked on me as a piece of furniture. I was there, and there was very little personal contact. You just didn't have time. I used to make a point of saying something personal to every child I taught sometime during the week. I wanted to say something to him personal. And I felt that I knew something about the children; I knew something about their problems, about their home life. And this isn't so any longer. And I don't understand why really unless it's a fault of mine. Because I have smaller classes now than I had. I used to have 39 or 40 in a class; now I have an average of 20 or 25. So I couldn't blame it on the fact that I had too heavy a teaching load. But I just felt that the students were. . . They just didn't want you to, you know, get that close to them. I think this is because of my age because I'm sure that with a younger teacher they felt a much closer relationship with them. Yet when I retired--I quit in June--and there were a number of students who came to me and spoke to me very personally. And it surprised me because I had not gotten this feeling during the year.

Another change, of course, I've noticed is the change in techniques. I can't say I've used many different ones. I tried using films, and there are very few math films. And I tried using an overhead projector, and I object to not having it available when I want to use it. When you have to sign up for it and have it delivered, you know, it sort of takes the edge off of it. I had the material right there in my room; I tried classes in individual study and we tried group work. But I didn't really do very much innovation in math. But in other areas of the school, it seems to me that they've done a great deal. It often makes the schoolwork very interesting for them. I go by classrooms, and I see them having committee work, you know, everybody in little groups. And I see panel discussions and all sorts of things that seem to be techniques that had used individualized instruction. And it seems to be that the kids should be getting so much more out of it. And this is why I don't understand when they say how they're so bored with school now. And, of course, the thing you hear most is, "It isn't relevant, it isn't relevant." I don't know, I guess. . .

NB: Have the children changed or have the circumstances _____?

DM: I think, when you say the children changed, I don't really know how to say it. I think the children know more now. More general knowledge than they did before, a few years ago. But, at the same time, I think they haven't as good a grasp of fundamentals. In my math work I was appalled at the number of children who knew, who didn't know their fundamental facts. They didn't know their addition and multiplication combinations. And I felt sometimes like I was beating my head against a stone wall. I could teach them the algebraic concepts, but they didn't get the right answers because they always made mistakes in arithmetic. And it got to the point where I wasn't sure of some of the combinations myself. You know, they say with English grammar, if they use it enough, if it's popular usage, then it will become a part of the language. And I felt that maybe this would happen with math figures. If 3 times 8 became 32 often enough, maybe that's what it would be instead of 24, ha, ha. But I think the children have a much more idea of the world, much better idea of the world. Many of them have done much more traveling than their teachers have done. It's a way of life for them. I had for a while when they were doing construction around here I would have in my class. . . Children would come in and say, "Hey, weren't you on this construction job in Louisiana?" Or, "Do you remember, we were up in Alaska?" And they apparently. . . Their parents moved around on construction jobs, and they had been all over. And brought with them a wealth of knowledge from what they had seen. I guess it's different in that way. I don't know any other ways that they are different.

NB: Would you advise someone to go into teaching?

DM: I have said that I could not honestly advise anybody to go into teaching because it seems to me such a frustrating thing now. But I think what I am doing is looking back to the way it was. And it'll never be like that again, and there's no reason why it should be. And it seems to me that the young people who come into teaching are perfectly happy in it. They don't mind the things that seem to me so frustrating. And what seems to me a poor condition or a poor product being produced. So I think it's just a matter, you know, of mind, approach. And yet I really don't feel. . . I wouldn't feel comfortable saying to a child, "I think teaching is a good field for you." It seems to me. . . It just seems too commercial. That's a funny thing to say, but it seems to me there's just too much of trying to put it in a business light. And I don't think teaching can be like that. I don't think it can be a 9 to 5 job. I think there's a lot more that goes into it than that. And if

DM: (Cont'd.)

you have to think that your hours are going to be, you know, that you're not going to put any time into it or anything like that, I don't think it would work. Now maybe it should.

MB: _____ (inaudible) _____

DM: I think unions here. . . I have very little experience with unions. My father belonged to the railroad brotherhood, and that is a union of a type. But I never heard of strikes in his lifetime. And to my mind, strikes are just terrible. I don't think teachers should go on strike. Now I realize that I have a different attitude toward that. I don't have any family to be responsible for. And I understand that for a fellow who has a family and who is buying a home and has financial responsibilities that it isn't easy to do as I say. If you don't like the conditions, go somewhere else or do something else. Now it would be easy for me to do that. I didn't do it, but it would have been easier for me. And so when I say I don't think you should strike, I don't know how you should bring about changes that you think should be brought about. But it seems to me like you ought to be able to sit down and talk things out. I just can't see children missing out on their education while you're trying to settle a strike. I don't really know how you'd work it. I don't know how it should be.

MB: If we could just go back to one thing that you told me before about the dining hall at the University.

DM: When I was in school, one of the things that everybody looked forward to was the chance of being able to wait on tables. We sat in the dining room--we had our meals in the, all three meals--we sat at round tables for eight and we were served our platters. They were brought to us, and it was regular waitress service. One of the girls had the job of head of dining hall and that was the status job on campus. And everybody took their two weeks. And if you could get in more than two weeks, she wasn't very pleased about it. We served--I can't think of anything else that you'd want to say about that. It was a way. . . You earned a very small sum. I'm not sure, I think, you got something like 35¢ a meal. And, as I say, you had only two weeks' time on it. Then the something else that you could do would be to carry baskets to the infirmary for the people who were sick. If you could get the job of taking those over, that was another job that was much sought after. And also, Sundays we didn't have an evening meal,

DM: (Cont'd.)

but we had in our dormitories, we had sort of like a tea. And you had to go to the dining room and pick up the supplies and bring them back in baskets and serve. There were not too many people who stayed around on weekends. And this was another job that you could do to get money. There were not too many jobs on campus. The only other one I can think of where you could earn money was postmaster, giving out the mail. And then there were lab assistants, too. They did have a few people, but there were very few.

MB: Could you mention your alumni _____?

DM: Pardon? Oh, yes. I enjoyed serving at the alumni dinners. We had a big celebration in May; we had May Day. And we had a May Queen and a May Court. And at this time all the alumni came back for May Day. We had a banquet in the evening; and, if you could get assigned to serving the banquet, this was a special joy too. And I enjoyed so much, after having served the platters, standing by the wall and looking around at the people and getting such a big kick out of their reminiscing and thinking, you know, what a lot of fun it was for them. And also, well, I don't know, how different they looked and acted. And now when I go back myself to reunions, I look at the girls who are serving and wonder if they have the same feeling about it--whether they see me as I saw the people then. I got such a big kick out of the things that they remembered and the things that they talked about and how things had changed. And I'm sure. . . Well, I don't even feel at home when I go back to the University now. I don't even have the interest in the college that I used to have. I, for years, worked on the alumni association. I just now sent back an acceptance for the scholarship committee. So I am going to work in the alumni group again, but I was on the alumni board of directors. And I felt a very big concern for what went on at the University. But it's so big now that I just don't feel any personal relationship at all. I know very few people over there. And when I go over on campus, I feel like a fish out of water. Again, I don't know where anything is anymore. And, again, it's the bigness of things that have just lost. . . At a dinner I'd gone to and Dr. _____ sat right alongside of me, and it was right after his office had been firebombed or whatever. And we talked about changes then. And I thought then about the contrast. It was the first time that I had seen him to talk to. And yet, when I was on campus, the President was Dr. Hullihon and everybody knew Dr. Hullihon. We used to talk to him; it was a personal thing. I'm conscious of the fact with size you can do a lot more. You have a lot more physical facilities that you can use. The same thing is true in schools. In our school

DM: (Cont'd.)

Now we have 2,000 students. And because we had--well, I guess maybe there's 2,400, I'm not sure of that--but we could offer much more and we had flexibility of scheduling that we couldn't have had in a smaller place. And yet I'm not sure that this compensates for the loss of personal relationships. My next-door neighbors are students at the University, and they talk about what little help they get in counseling and how when they go to their counselor, how many times he won't be there. Nobody knows where he is, or they'll have to go back and how unsatisfactory the situation is. And for me it was a one-to-one relationship. The people were very much interested in me as a person and very much interested in helping me make decisions. And I'll tell you something else. I may be completely wrong on this. I felt that my experience at the University was. . .
(tape ran out)

(END OF INTERVIEW)