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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
MISS ANNE STAUTER
VETERAN NEWARK SCHOOL TEACHER
AUGUST 21, 1974

Transcribed by:

R. Herman

May 11, 1978

Interview with: Miss Anne Stauter

Newark, Delaware

August 21, 1974

Interviewed by: Rebecca Button

B = Rebecca Button

S = Miss Anne Stauter

B: This is an interview with Anne Stauter, a long time teacher in Newark schools at her home in Newark on August 21, 1974. Miss Stauter, where did you grow up?

S: I grew up in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, Akron, Pennsylvania.

B: Where is Akron?

S: Well, it's about ten miles north of Lancaster.

B: Was your family Pennsylvania Dutch?

S: Yes, they were.

B: Did you grow up with Pennsylvania Dutch cooking?

S: That's right.

B: Do you still do it?

S: Partly yes, um hum. I like to.

B: Was "Groundhog Day" big up there?

S: Oh rather big but my mother really believed in all that. She lived through some of those things and experiences but it was their teacher so they experiences a lot of things.

B: Like what?

S: Well, all these different things about...let's say about the moon when you plant and when you do things like on certain days you do this and certain days you don't do those things.

B: What was a day when you didn't start something?

S: One day we didn't do something was on...what was the name of that

day in the spring...when you didn't work. It was called...what was the name of that day...I can't remember...Pentecost or something. You didn't work and you just loafed around or did few things. They were very conscientious about just little customs that they were accustomed to.

B: Well, were they Dutch reform?

S: No, they were Pennsylvania Lutheran people. I came from a Lutheran family, both sides of my family and my one side of my family was very long lived or live, whatever you say, because my mother now would be a hundred and twelve years old at this time in July.

B: You mean she's still living?

S: No, no, no, no.

B: But you mean she lived a long time.

S: She lived to be eighty nine.

B: That's a very good kind of thing to have in your background.

S: That's right! It sure is!

B: Well, were they farmers?

S: My parents were not farmers. My mother grew up on a farm. My grandparents were farmers but my real parents were not farmers but we spoke the Pennsylvania Dutch language. I had a grandmother who was ninety three who lived with us and she couldn't speak English very well so out of courtesy we had to speak Pennsylvania German to her but we'd sit say at the dinner table and we'd speak Pennsylvania German to my grandmother and look at our parents and speak English so we did both of them.

B: Did that make you interested in studying German?

S: A little bit I'd say, yeth. I took some courses in German. High German is a different language from Pennsylvania German.

B: What is Pennsylvania German?

S: Well, I think it's just kind of a...say, something between English and Pennsylvania...real German. It's an offspring of that see. They came over here and got their English and their German mixed up and they forget...Pennsylvania German.

B: Well, from expressions like "red up" meaning to clean up...

S: Yeah.

B: Is that a German word, "red"?

S: Well, they used that. It's a Pennsylvania Dutch word. I don't think too many people use that anymore but that was one of them yeah, right.

B: Was there a large community there at Akron?

S: No.

B: Dutch or German, Pennsylvania German?

S: Well, they were all...they're all Pennsylvania German, Dutch. Now, it has changed of course. A lot of people have moved into the area so it wouldn't...when I was young it was country first and now it's become a town, quite sizeable town.

B: Did you go to Lancaster on market day?

S: Oh yes, very often.

B: The open market there?

S: Well, what do you mean?

B: It was under a large roof.

S: Under a large roof yes.

B: Was it like the one now, the Lancaster market now?

S: Yep, they're changing, trying to restore that thing and make sort of a historic market and now of course they have moved out into the country where they have a big market also because of the

tourists. The tourists just swamp that market and that made it... ruined it for people. Now they have a place in the country where some days there's high as two hundred busses come to that market out in the country. So...but it's fabulous. Those markets are fabulous.

B: The food is still very good.

S: Oh yeah, very good, clean as a pit.

B: And is that Mennonite and Amish?

S: That's right. They're still up there. Of course those are what we call "Plain People", "Plain Folks".

B: And they're still there.

S: Oh yes, yes.

B: But...is the tourist business changing their communities too?

S: They're trying to. They don't like it, the Amish people don't like it. Mennonites do not bother as much because they're a little more worldly than the Amish. The Amish of course won't have cars, won't have modern conveniences, won't have any electricity; they still live like...but they are very good people.

B: The Amish community and the Mennonite community around Lancaster then is still strong in spite of modern encroachment.

S: Oh yes, um hum, yes right. Of course then they're Lancaster...they live a little farther north. They live near Ephrata. I don't know if you've ever heard of the name Ephrata, and around that community. That's more Amish than anyplace else and Mennonite. Of course as you know there are about four or five different Mennonite factions. We have...so you want to know what I have? We have the "Black Bumper Mennonite",...

B: What is that?

S: That is they paint their bumpers black. They won't have any chrome on their bumpers. That's too worldly. And then we have the "Old Mennonites" and the "New Mennonites" and...

B: What are they like?

S: Well, they're a little more modern and they will have television and drive automobiles and all of that which...so they're more modern.

B: And that leaves two more kinds.

S: Did I say that?

B: You said the black bumper, the old and new. You said there were about five.

S: "Pike Mennonites"

B: What are the "Pike Mennonites"?

S: I don't know. I can't tell you exactly what they are. I just don't know what their philosophy of life is. I do know the difference between the old and the new.

B: But are they old world people or do some of them live in town?

S: They live in towns now, yeah, very beautiful homes and most of them have money and they've been thrifty. Of course all Pennsylvania Dutch people are thrifty. I mean that doesn't mean they have to have money but they're thrifty. They know how to make the best of every little thing.

B: And clean.

S: And clean, to the nth degree I would say, clean, right.

B: Well, how did you happen to leave your home? Did you go to college from Akron?

S: Oh yes, oh yeah, of course I did. I got my degree.

B: Where?

S: Well, I got my degrees at State College, Millersville State College, I got one degree, and the other degree, my master's degree, was Columbia University. I took a degree there in mathematics.

B: And was Newark your first teaching job?

S: No, I had taught in Pennsylvania before I came here.

B: Where did you teach in Pennsylvania?

S: I taught in a town called Nessville, Pennsylvania before I came here.

B: Who recruited you for Newark?

S: Well, I just came down here with a friend who was my math instructor in college and made me a math teacher actually. We came down here because there was an opening in the math department and we came down here and I got the job.

B: When was that?

S: 1931

B: That was depression time.

S: Yes

B: What was the Newark school like in '31 and what was the community like then?

S: Well, it was a nice, quiet little college town and you knew everybody. The school had about fifty five teachers, then. Now, you know what there are, maybe five to eight hundred so, I've seen all this go on, all...the rise and fall and the...oh, I don't know... maybe call it the inflation. I don't know what you'd call it. I've gone through an awful lot.

B: When you first came, who do you remember particularly on the faculty? And what was the school like?

S: Well, I can't help but remember the superintendent because he was

rather an erratic man. He was not slow to anger I would say.

B: Who was that?

S: His name was Ira Brinser. He's a famous man around if you'd been here a long time and he really was. I think he was his own problem. I think he was a good educator but he was too, oh, I don't know. He was too...he picked you out...he watched little petty things too closely, watched what was going on if you know, so. But, he wasn't here very long. He left and then we had a new superintendent by the name of Dr. Douglas. Dr. Carlton E. Douglas came here from Baltimore and became the superintendent of schools and he was a very human somebody and became very well liked. This was in about 1974 I think he came here, marvelous family all the way around and he was entirely different so the atmosphere in the schools changed a great deal. People were not afraid to stand together and talk like they were when Brinser was there you know. So, he was a grand man and we had a real good faculty and it was under his superintendency that I was in the mathematics department but I also became interested in dramatics just for the fun of it and I did a lot of dramatics coaching plays so that I think in all I directed ten faculty plays and John Monroe was in a couple of them.

B: Can you tell us some of those plays, the kinds of plays you did and how often you would have them?

S: Every year, once a year.

B: And it was the faculty play you directed or did you also direct student plays?

S: I directed student plays and I taught a class in dramatics and I organized a Thespian troop just because I was easy to approach and

nobody else wanted to do it and they picked on me. That's about it. I was not an English teacher. I was a math teacher.

B: What about the kinds of plays did you do?

S: Well, I can tell you what we did. I know that the very first play we did was "Mrs. Wigg's Cabbage Patch." That was way back. And we did things like "Charlie's Aunt", "Quality Street", "I Remember Mama", gee, I can't remember all of them anymore; "I Remember Mama", "Abbey's Irish Rose", all some of the good old fashioned plays and they were good and well, I did ten faculty plays; can't even mention them all now; I can't remember them. I could show you...

B: And you had good co-operation from your faculty?

S: Oh yes, it was the talk of the town and we had a great time. It was hard work teaching all day and working all night but we had a real good time and everybody knew everybody and everybody pitched in and we just had a great deal of fun. It was good.

B: Did you have some outstanding...well, first of all, what about some faculty that you knew like John Munroe; what happened; how many of them would you say continued in Newark schools as you did or was there a great influx and out go or not?

S: Not for those years that we were still over in that first building. That of course as the town grew, faculty grew and then there was a lot more people. Of course when I was over in the new high school I think we had only a hundred teachers and when I retired which was 1962, it's a long time ago; see my gray hair? And then I don't know how many faculty we had, maybe a little over a hundred so it's growing out of proportions and I have no part of it so I don't know much about it. Don't want any. I earned my retirement and that's it.

B: What about the contrast between the school? Did you find the overcrowding a problem in terms of teaching? The increasing classes, the increasing enrollment?

S: Well, not too much then no. We were still...we used to...if I had a class of thirty or sometimes thirty five, I just taught and I didn't complain about it. This was our job. Of course I think teachers then were a little more dedicated maybe than they are now. This was their profession and they made it their profession. I decided that it was my profession and I was a dedicated teacher. Maybe I should have been a cook or a housekeeper but I missed out on that so...

B: Did you enjoy...did you have some special students that you particularly remember?

S: Oh yeah, I had a lot of special students. Golly, I don't know now. In my math field of course I...it was college preparatory math therefore I taught a lot of boys and prepared them for the University of Delaware. So, it was very enjoyable. Yeah, I had a lot of...Dr. Hurm who is a practicing doctor here was one of my students and he will tell you about our high school days. He's one of the men around here right now and lets see who else. Well, the boys down at the bank, two boys down at Wilmington Trust Company. I'd go in there and talk to them. Everywhere you go you find somebody you taught and you may remember the face but you finally forget the name. I don't apologize anymore for that.

B: Well, you were at the front of the room and there were a whole lot of them in the room.

S: Yes, that's right.

B: They can remember you better.

S: Oh, you're telling me. Well, I have a lot of remembrances. I have scrapbooks of my dramatics just of all the pictures and all the plays I did.

B: Well, did you do them all at the Newark school on the stage?

S: That's right.

B: Usually in the spring?

S: Well, throughout the year. In the spring was usually...I did not do all the senior class plays. Every once in a while I'd do one of those but then I did Thespian plays and things like that.

B: Did you enjoy going up to New York to see plays?

S: Oh yes.

B: Going to the playhouse...you had a regular...

S: Well, my brother is in New York so I would go up there and in a week I'd see maybe four or five shows.

B: Do you go up to New York now to see the shows?

S: No, not too much no.

B: Broadway's in a state now where it isn't too healthy.

S: Safe? That's right so I don't go to many.

B: Oh, I didn't mean about safe but it's supposedly in a decline period, difficult period.

S: Yeah, I could see that too. Yeah, if I want to see a good show I'll watch my television. We do have good shows on television.

B: Right. Would you say that there hadn't really been very much difference in the climate in the Newark school and in teaching except for the growth and size changes?

S: Yes, I would say that. Um hum, of course now I don't know what I'd say now but I would say...

B: Well, I meant during your period.

S: During my day, yeah, right.

B: And exactly how long did you teach? You retired in '62 and you started in '31.

S: You have to teach thirty years of course to retire.

B: So you taught thirty one years.

S: Here. But I had some more experience before I came here so I taught over thirty one years. So I earned a rest.

B: Well, how did you happen to decide to make your retirement here instead of going back to Lancaster or around Lancaster?

S: Well, my brother was on the appellate staff of the income tax in New York and I don't know, we had planned to go back to our home. We had a home there and then this little house came up and we looked at it and kind of liked it. We saw that we had Pennsylvania Dutch antiques that this house would take so we decided that we'd just settle here; sell our home in Pennsylvania and he retired in 1955 from the government, internal revenue service, and came here to live. The city guided him of course but he became interested in gardening, flowers, roses and we had a real good time. Neither of us were ever married unfortunately maybe or fortunately, you can't tell. Maybe we could have and just didn't. I'm not quoting anything about that. So, we lived here and we had a grand time and then he died in 1966 and left me alone so I still hold forth, but I've got a lot of good friends in this town and they just insist I'm going to stay here as long as I positively can so I'm going to.

B: Well, that's good for Newark.

S: Well, I don't know about that but I do have a lot of good friends, churchwise and otherwise.

B: Well, the Newark school it seems to me has a good feeling, the school that you taught in first; it seems to be a well designed, sort of sunny kind of school. Did you always find it that way?

S: Oh yes, I enjoyed every minute I taught here. I really did. It was worth teaching. And then of course after Mr. Douglas was superintendent, Mr. Shew came to be superintendent.

B: Oh! and what were any changes that he made?

S: Well, he sort of followed Mr. Douglas's pattern a lot. He was a good superintendent. He was a younger man of course and then Dr. Kutz who was the last principal of the high school; he became assistant principal there to Mr. Shew and that was a good team. Of course Dr. Kutz retired recently too. But everybody knows Dr. Kutz. He's another good old Pennsylvania Dutchman. So, that was that.

B: Could you tell us about some of the teachers that you had experience with through your career? you remember as particularly fine teachers and some of the things they might have contributed?

S: Well, I remember the social studies teacher, Ann Gallagher; she lived here all her life and her father at one time was on the school board. She was a good social science teacher and another cohort of mine in the math department was Mary Armstrong who still lives here and Ann Chalmers is a resident of this town. She taught there and then we had two teachers from Wilmington, Greta McKinsey and Emil Wilkinson that were always very popular; good teachers in the junior high school and Stanley Gibbs who at the present time is a very ill man and I feel badly about that and we had fellows who came and went of course like Bob Kern and I can't remember some of our names anymore now at this moment and some of the other

teachers, let's see, Rebecca Kirk, Mr. Gillespie was a very fine physics teacher and coach of athletics. And, well, I don't know, there's a number of them that I could...Mrs. McClary. She's still living in town here. She was in the grades and Minnie Smithers who was from Chesapeake City. I might mention Dr. Stafford who's connected with the university of course and he was one of the people also instrumental in helping to form our first Lutheran church here in Newark, Delaware. I'll never forget the very first meeting where we talked about forming the Lutheran church was held at Dr. Stafford's home. There were about thirty people present.

B: When was that?

S: That was about 1952 and then from then on...we started with thirty people and we started working and we had to have a membership of a hundred before we could start a congregation which is what we soon had and then we started our first Lutheran church here which we held our services in the Warwick Funeral Home for a long time and till it became too small and then we went into the Masonic Temple and held our services there and all this time we were planning the building of a new church which is out on Chestnut Hill Road. So, we worked hard on that, laying plans and raising money. We started from scratch. Nobody had any money so we all had to start by our own contributions and finally we were able to start building a church which you see out there now which is just part of the church.

B: How large is your congregation?

S: Our congregation now is about six hundred and some. It's grown and grown. We really outgrew our chapel or church so that we have to

have two services every Sunday. We have two pastors and the one pastor that is a Fisher is a campus pastor so he spends time at our church and also on the college campus with the Lutheran students. And, they're both young men and we've grown quite a lot and it's been a very interesting thrill to help to start a church and watch it grow and I certainly have gotten a lot out of it and enjoyed it. It's meant a great deal to me because I do have a background; Lutheran all my life and coming here and not having your own church, I did miss it. But, then at that time I was still commuting and I would go home on weekends therefore I did get to my Lutheran church at home. I often become very nostalgic and think I ought to go back to my little old town but I don't have as many friends there. I have some very good friends, life long friends I would say but I have many more friends here and more activity, more things to do in wintertime, more games of bridge to play and etcetera, etcetera.

B: Are you a good bridge player?

S: Yeah, love to play bridge very much.

B: Well, I think this has been a grand slam type of interview.

S: I don't know about that.

B: Is there anything you can think of that you would like to say that you think is rather important? Maybe the changes in the town itself? Can you project what you see coming do you think in Newark?

B: No, I just can't. It's gone so fast you could hardly believe it. Unbelievable the changes. Of course you kind of grew up with it. See, each year this is happening, this has happened and so, what I can't understand...

B: But we've had one interesting thing happen just this week when the

city council voted five to two not to allow Company to build a two level mall.

S: Yeah

B: That was very interesting because it meant that the Newark residents as a group were saying that they didn't want to have more traffic problem and growth on Kirkwood highway, a major feeder of traffic into the city.

S: Of course they came around you know for signers to that thing. Came to my door, a young couple...it's fair I guess, I don't know.

B: Signer against or for?

S: Either way. I think she wanted it for. I wouldn't sign it so she was very disappointed. I just wouldn't sign my name to anything.

B: That might be a change in the pattern of growth that might be beginning.

S: Um hum. I think she was for probably but I just refused. She said, "Oh, I'm sorry you won't sign it." So, I don't know. I said I had no pros or cons one way or the other. I just didn't think it didn't bother me too much. I'm in a quiet section. I don't think it would be a very good place for a mall.

B: No. Thank you very much.

S: Your welcome.