

## Interview with Dr. Retta Muprhy

**Interviewers: Merry FitzPatrick and Ronald C. (Ron) Brown**

**Transcriber: Cathy Sappington**

**Date of Interview: August 17, 1978**

**Location: Dr. Murphy's home in San Marcos, TX**

---

Summary: Dr. Retta Murphy talks about her experiences at Southwest Texas State, from her arrival in 1919 when the school was still a Normal College, through her retirement in 1956. She relates stories about President "Prexy" Evans, President Flowers, Lyndon Johnson, and mentions SWT professors H.M. Greene, James Taylor, Emmie Craddock, Alfred Nolle, and Betty Kissler among others. She also talks about her beliefs about education and teaching and offers examples from her years of teaching college students. The interviewers and Dr. Murphy had a collegial relationship and they laughed through much of the interview.

*[Begin tape, side A]*

**Ronald C. Brown:** This is August 17, 1978. Mary FitzPatrick and Ronald Brown of the History Department at Southwest Texas State are interviewing Dr. Retta Murphy at her home in San Marcos, Texas.

*... [First seconds of audio are missing]*

*[00:24]*

**Dr. Murphy:** ...June 1919, and it's had so many names--

**Merry FitzPatrick:** Well, I did, I just believe I was reading it was in 1922 that it became Teacher's College.

**Ron Brown:** Yeah. That it became—yeah that it started out as one of those Normal Schools.

**Murphy:** Well then it must have been a Normal when I came here.

**FitzPatrick:** Were you normal? (laughs).

**Murphy:** No! (all laugh) Never have been. Not guilty, your honor!

**FitzPatrick:** Well I figured... Glen Smith lives in Normal, Illinois.

**Murphy:** I was in Trinity University at the time which was Waxahachie then. And I decided that a Church College was no place to spend one's life in because they would undoubtedly have financial difficulties as time wore on, and that would cause others, and especially women, they would get it first, you know. And then another thing, I had a duty there that I had not anticipated when I went there which was Dean of Women and I'd just assume be lit out and shot as to be Dean of Women. Because I didn't care where the girls went for the weekend, nor with whom, nor anything about those things. I was just interested in them in the classroom and on the campus. And they had to sign a register with me, and I had to live in a dormitory with the whole lot of them.

**Brown:** Oh, my goodness.

**Murphy:** And they had to sign a register with me every time they left town. Where they were going, and with whom, and I don't know what all. And in later years I met myself every time I looked at – what was our Dean of Women?

**FitzPatrick:** Brogdon.

**Murphy:** – Miss Brogdon. That was just reveled in that sort of atmosphere, and I loathed it. (Brown and FitzPatrick laugh)

[02:31]

**Brown:** She really liked it?

**Murphy:** Yes, she did, I think she did.

**FitzPatrick:** I think she did. Well, maybe it was a good thing, maybe we needed those too –

**Murphy:** Maybe so. It's not much worse now, they go out and get killed occasionally, and that keeps them thinned out (FitzPatrick laughs) a little bit. The worst ones. I am reminded of a Presbyterian minister from Waco, Dr. Gallagher, who taught me to swim in the Guadalupe River at Kerrville. And we met each other by appointment, ready for an hour—all ready to get in the river, you know. And he looked me up and down and said, now the very first thing you do is to take off those stockings (all laugh). And I said "Thank you! That will give me the greatest pleasure." Ms. Brogdon required us to wear them here in the San Marcos River, and I just didn't think about them and I went to Kerrville, I just put them on, although I hated them. And that was his first remark to me, the preacher. And I thought well, good. You're sure enough somebody. (laughter)

**Brown:** Well what kind of person was Dean Brogdon?

**Murphy:** She was good and sweet and kind and all that sort of thing. But she was very, very proper. And I never was, and so— but we never did quarrel or anything, we got along all right. Cause I didn't meddle with her business, and she didn't meddle with mine. So, we got along fine.

**Brown:** Well I noticed, when I was looking through the yearbooks, that you rarely were a sponsor for any of the social clubs, or the literary societies —

**Murphy:** No, I don't think I was proper enough when— (all laugh) and then another thing, I never was situated so I was in any way capable of entertaining them myself as a hostess. And I think a sponsor of a group sometimes has that duty to do, and I'd rather be unknown than to go through that. (Brown laughs)

**Brown:** Well, what did you encounter any discrimination because of your sex? Being a woman at the time—

**Murphy:** Oh, just as a—oh you mean in Trinity?

**Brown:** No, here at Southwest.

**Murphy:** Because I was a woman?

**Brown:** Because you were a woman. Did you feel there was a dual standard?

**Murphy:** Oh yes, still is.

**Brown:** In what personal—

**Murphy:** In matters of salary mainly, and things like that. Material things. I don't remember getting any distinctive notice at all as to-- what was complementary. One time—but nobody noticed it, it wasn't in the paper, and it wasn't mentioned, and it need not be. A new priest was assigned to St. John's Church here, which at the time was in the next block from where I was teaching. And he was fresh from Latin America, and he had studied English a little bit, but his language of course was Spanish. He was fluent in that, but his English was spotty, at least very hesitant. And he came up to the college and ask the authorities up there to let him attend a class as a visitor regularly, just to hear English spoken. And he said I want a teacher that speaks good English, and most of the time, so that there's not much discussion going on in the class. And so Prexy put him in my room. And I thought that was a great compliment. And that's about the only one I ever got out of him at that time (laughter), and that wasn't publicized in any way at all.

**Brown:** And that was Dr. Evans or President Evans?

**Murphy:** I guess it was. I don't remember the dates of things that happened up there. Are you....

**FitzPatrick:** I can't, do you remember when Dr. Flowers came?

**Murphy:** 40—I don't remember, 42, I think.

**Brown:** Did— how did you feel about the two men that were the chairman during most of the time you were there? I guess it was Dr. Arnold first, and then later—

**Murphy:** I thought they were personally loveable enough. I didn't think they were anything wonderful, either one of them, but then they didn't think that about me either, so we got along just fine. (all laugh)

**Brown:** What kind of class—what courses did you teach?

**Murphy:** Just anything that President Evans assigned. He said anybody that went to school long enough to be able to teach in a college should be able to teach anything. And that was his idea. (laughter) He was a brother to Hiram Evans, the Ku Klux Grand Dragon, and of course you might know from that that he had some queer ideas. And this was one of them, that if you were a college teacher, you ought to be able to teach anything from Greek or – on to spelling.

**Brown:** What was the most unusual thing you ever taught?

**Murphy:** He told me to organize — the school was then fairly young. We didn't have as many departments that it was to have later. And he wanted it to have a Department of Geography, including the physical side of it with — what was this thing here — meteorology, is that right? Is that the word I want? I said the last word I ever had on Geography was in the sixth grade in public school in my hometown. And I had a book about this wide behind which we conversed at our desks, you know (all laugh). And he said "It doesn't make any difference whether you had it or not, you ought to be able to teach it if you're in a college. Get busy and organize that department." So, I did, I organized that department, announced a few courses in it. And I didn't anymore know — you should've seen me reading some of it (all laugh). Just feverishly. And then when I thought it was organized, I told him. I said I've done all that I can do and do the work that I am doing in the history department besides. He said well he'd get somebody, and I think that's when he got Ms. Lowman, wasn't she the first one?

**FitzPatrick:** I don't know, the only one I knew was Sterry.

**Murphy:** Yeah, well Sterry was later. Ms. Lowman, I think came and pretty soon it was a flourishing department. She had courses and things like that on it from some university or other. She knew one planet from another, and I still don't. (laughter)

[10:45]

**Brown:** Was there ever any indication how President Evans felt about his brother Hiram?

**Murphy:** Never, I must hand him my praise on that subject. You never could tell from anything he said or did that he had ever heard of Hiram Evans. And Hiram didn't visit here either. I'm sure brother wouldn't let him because I don't think it would've been helpful for Dr. Evans, do you? And Dr. Evans was queer, and I could see well enough how they could be brothers, but Dr. Evans knew how to restrain himself. I never knew him to say anything imprudent for his own good in my hearing.

**Brown:** mm-hmm

**Murphy:** He did one time. Some girl was in a course that I was teaching. Some freshman or sophomore history course. She never opened a book. She sat in class quietly, but she never knew anything in class, and on quiz occasions, she never knew anything. Her papers were averaged very close down to zero. She didn't read, she didn't talk, she didn't do anything. She was just an occupant of a chair mostly. So, I didn't waste much time on her, I should have, I suppose, but I didn't. And when the semester was out, I gave her an "F" on the course and thought nothing of it. Didn't think she would either. Well, next thing I knew, Dr. Evans, the President sent for me and told me that had to be changed, that she had to be given a passing grade. And I said well she doesn't know three words in the course. She doesn't know anything, made no effort to find out anything, she didn't listen to what was going on in class, and didn't seem to comprehend anything when she did listen. "That's alright, you got to change it. Doesn't make any difference whether she did or not, I want her to have a passing grade." And I thought, well now which do I care most for, whether this comes out truthfully or not, or whether I have a job or not. Because he had the power to fire you. So, I went to the registrar's office, I first put the "F" on the right thing. In those days, we made out our own grades, copied our own grades on the registrar's sheets. In the registrar's office in the records department. And so, I put down an "F" there, and thought that would end the matter. But he, the president, went in there and looked it up and there was that "F" there. So, he sent for me again. And I took a second licking from him so to speak. But, before I went back to the office to do anything about it, he himself went, or somebody went, and anyway her whole record was copied fresh. And a "C", or a "D", I forget which was put there. I didn't put it there, but it was under my name.

**Brown:** My goodness.

**Murphy:** So, I wrote in small letters right by it on the same line with it, right after the grade "By order of the president" (all laugh) and I didn't think he would ever see that. But, he did, and had the whole thing copied again (laughter).

[14:55]

**Brown:** My goodness! Well who was this girl?

**Murphy:** And he never did tell me, of course, while he was in office why he did that. And I asked him why. And he said that was something that was outside of my can, or something, he didn't tell me. But long after he retired, we sometimes met each other, not by design, but just you might say accidentally at a restaurant. Both of us were given to eating out, and his wife was an invalid and he often ate downtown, and so did I. And I guess I had retired too by that time, so I suppose he could feel more relaxed with me, and I with him. And he never did have his own car there, somebody always had to take him home, or he had to call. So, whenever I met him, I would usually take him home after. So, we were climbing the hill up there to his place in my car. And I brought that girl up, that subject up, and I said "Why did you insist on changing her grade when she couldn't make a "D", let alone anything else?" He said "because her parents were very influential politically in the community where they lived, and I didn't want to lose their

support.” And I thought well now that’s the frankest thing I ever heard you say (laughter). But it was safe to say it them.

**Brown:** It didn’t matter anymore. Oh my.

**FitzPatrick:** I guess that—was that during that time in the early [19]30’s when there was talk of closing the school?

**Murphy:** Might have been, I don’t know. I can’t remember the dates when anything happened up there to me. One thing or another, the years are so much alike.

**FitzPatrick:** You know I did that study for Dr. Cotton, in the early [19]30’s, and I went through all that—a lot of documents (audio cuts out) . . . I guess it was Ferguson, well Mrs. Ferguson was in, but they were talking about closing all the Teacher’s Colleges. And this one was high on the list, now I remember he was turning—

**Murphy:** I remember there was a very emphatic dislike of Teacher’s Colleges because they were already expressing airy very nothing in their public speakers, you know. Who was that educational leader that blossomed so widely in the nation in the 1920’s? He was the first of the prominent nationwide educators.

**Brown:** Would that have been John Dewey?

**Murphy:** Yeah, that’s who it was. I couldn’t think of Dewey.

**FitzPatrick:** Betty [*Kissler*] and I had to go to a meeting of educators for the Texas Education Agency, you know now has hundreds of people with EdDs, and they had a crew of them over here talking to us about the new standards for training teachers. Ooh— I wish you could hear the words.

**Murphy:** I’m glad I didn’t.

**FitzPatrick:** It gives me mental indigestion.

[18:33]

**Murphy:** Just the very thought of him released a lot in me that (all laugh)... well, it wasn’t very discreet, I remember the day he died. Well, I guess it was the next day, it came out in the news. Austin paper for instance. His death, John Dewey’s death, and George Sullivan was our minister then, I think I told you this, didn’t I tell you what I said to him?

**FitzPatrick:** I think so, but Ron hasn’t heard it.

**Murphy:** Well, I was driving down from the campus to town, to home through town and George was going to the post office likewise, so I invited him to go with me that far, because I passed right by the post office. And on the way down, he regaled me with the morning news in the Austin paper, and he said “Did you know John Dewey was dead? His death’s in this morning’s

paper.” I said, “Well, I can stand that, he should’ve been lit out and shot thirty years ago.” (laughter) And that just shocked George. Because he was a preacher, you know, a pastor. And he said “Why?!?” Well, he was not in the interest of education, he was in the interest of being interested. He wants cheap labor. And when I think of that, and the succession to George Dewey ever since. And even if it was an imprudent remark on my part, I still think it was just.

**FitzPatrick:** Dr. Murphy, did you know he’s back here? He’s retired now, and he’s in our church.

[20:20]

**Murphy:** Yes, and I asked him whether he was going to come out of the presbytery and become a local church member or stay in the presbytery. And he said “I’m going to stay in the presbytery although I have to change presbyteries,” because his pastor—so he’s a retired minister that lives here in San Marcos, and he preached two or three times a few Sunday’s ago when both of our ministers were elsewhere. And I’m sorry I had to miss it.

**Brown:** Dr. Murphy, what was your approach, or your idea in teaching the classes? What did you want the students to learn, or what did you want to transmit to them about your understanding?

**Murphy:** Well at that time I had such a bitter and unrestrained loathing of the course, the subject called education, and remarks from educationists on how to teach, that I didn’t have any well formulated idea myself about it. And I doubt I ever preformed one or not. But I did think that if you could get your students to read, and require some reporting on what they had read, that you would be doing a good service. And I also thought that if they could write often, that would be good too. But as to whether they should just discuss something in class, they would require more time than they were allotted anyway. Because it takes a lot of time to do it that way, and you don’t cover much ground. And sometimes you get wrong ideas mixed up with some good ones. Well I never did do much of that. I usually did most of the talking myself. But I didn’t sit at the desk and do it, I never could teach anybody anything if I sat at a desk. I had to stand. So, I stood by the side of the desk. And at that distance, eyesight distance from my notes, I couldn’t see them, so I was compelled to remember a good deal for each day and forget it the next day. You know. Because nobody ever asked me about it the next day about it. So, I escaped that way. You can imagine how much I’ve forgotten in the last 22 years.

**FitzPatrick:** Well as a student, I think I’m going to have to disagree with some of that. (all laugh)

[23:23]

**Murphy:** Well you were measuring me by classroom exposure, not by daily exposure.

**FitzPatrick:** But you know Dr. Murphy, I did a research paper for you on the Argentine Cattle Industry on my master’s level and—you remember? No, you don’t remember that. But I remember being forced to do the kind of research that you like and make the kind of reports that you like, and it really sticks in my mind. You know, thirty years this year.

**Murphy:** I bet you we did some outlining.

**FitzPatrick:** Oh, you bet!

**Murphy:** So, there would be some direction on where you were going on that.

**FitzPatrick:** Furthermore, when I did my first draft of my master's thesis and I first handed Dr. Taylor—and what skin he didn't take off then you took off (all laugh). And I started off with a split infinity, which I've never done since.

**Murphy:** We just split several things I guess, getting it unsplit (laughter). Well, I surely did brag on you to Dr. Flowers. Soon after he came here, you and your brother, and two or three others of our very best students, I thought were in the University of Texas. Had finished here, and gone up there for further instruction, and Dr. Flowers came into a group of us that were gossiping one day and joined the crowd just socially. And oh, he was thrilled over the news that he had just had from the University of Texas over what wonderful records these students up there were making. Every student from our college that was up there was just doing straight "A" work, and we were very proud of that of course.

I never could resist saying something that would puzzle Dr. Flowers. I loved him, but he was so matter of fact, you know, and so trustful and everything else. So, when he was praising these students to the skies, I touched his arm and said, well now Dr. Flowers, there's nothing strange about that, those kids can read and write. And he of course didn't know what I meant by that for a while, finally he did, and then he agreed with me, they knew how to read and write. And they had got that down here at the foot of the hill before they ever went to Austin.

[26:30]

**FitzPatrick:** Was his degree in education?

**Murphy:** Yes, at Columbia University that Teachers College in the university, Columbia University. Nearly everybody who went up there went into the Teacher's College. I've never heard any more interesting lectures from a viewpoint of just entertainment than education lectures from distinguished educators. One of them was up here at the university. What was that man's name? Can't think of it right this minute, being nearly 100 years old. Ah, I'll think of it presently, if ever. But anyway, he was very interesting I thought, and one summer, I was in the University of Chicago. I had to take a certain amount of education, you know, so that my certificate would look blameless, and so I took a course from a professor who was visiting in the University of Chicago from some eastern university named Judd, J-U-D-D. And he was magnificent, we just sat spell bound and listened to him. He was so entertaining, and interesting, and even though he said things that we considered no account, they were interesting. He wasn't hard to listen to at all. And I took one or two in the University of Colorado, I think. Mostly from visiting professors in the summertime.

**Brown:** Did you go most summers to work on your—this was after you had started at Southwest, and before you finished your doctoral program?



**Murphy:** Yes, I did the rest of the work at night in the University of Texas, and in summer sessions, taking an absence from here, you see. In Boulder, Colorado, and Chicago, and Austin.

**Brown:** Who did you take course work from when you were in Boulder? Was there anybody there that you—

**Murphy:** Yes, I especially liked him. And they were great hands too. See I was only there in summers, and that's the time visiting professors from the East combined work with a vacation trip out to the Rocky Mountains. And so, I was nearly always in the class under some Easterner and I thought I must remember their names, because they were distinguished people, but I couldn't tell you the name of a single one of them right now. I have them written down somewhere, but I couldn't tell you where to find them.

**Brown:** Well who did you do your dissertation with at UT, who did you finally—

[29:47]

**Murphy:** Dr. Hackey, wasn't that his name? I'm proud of myself for remembering his name. I thought for a second there I wasn't going to think of it—yes, Hackey.

**Brown:** What did you do your dissertation on?

**Murphy:** Well, I'm almost ashamed to say because I've flittered around all over the globe in the fields of teaching, forcing me to do a lot of reading. Which of course was good for me, but sometimes irritating to me, and so I went from medieval and then modern Europe, and then to United States history, and finally landed in Latin American. And that's where I did the doctoral work. And I did the master's work in modern Europe under Dr. Riker I believe his name was. I remember the master's thesis was on Joseph the Second of Austria and his handling of the Eastern Question, as it was called then. And it was a subject in which I was very much interested in. But, the other thesis, the last one, was on Spanish Presidio Management in New Spain. How the presidios were located, and manned, and managed, and supplied. Oh, things like that, you know.

**Brown:** Had they already begun to acquire that excellent collection of Spanish and Mexican documents at UT when you were working on your thesis?

**Murphy:** They had a good many of them, but I don't know whether they—that's where I got what little information, I ever acquired in it. (Brown laughs)

[31:50]

**Brown:** Were there any unusual characters on campus that you remember? I guess Prof Greene?

**Murphy:** Oh, you mean here?

**Brown:** Yes, here at Southwest. Any that stick in your mind?

**Murphy:** I think Prof Greene [*government and debate professor Howard M. Greene*] was about the queerest person— (FitzPatrick and Brown laugh). Did you ever know of him?

**Brown:** No. Well, I've read about him, and I've heard a few stories. You didn't have—

**Murphy:** Now, he has a son who they say was quite conventional and proper, and fairly distinguished in the University of California at— oh you know how those (?) in California, where the state university was located for a long time, I forget which one of them he was in. His oldest son, but they say he was a really distinguished professor there. But he didn't put on what I would consider a lot of affectation like Greene did. Greene was entertaining, you know. And Greene was attractive, there was something about him that attracted students to him. They just flocked to him.

[33:12]

**Brown:** Well he was one of the people that Lyndon [*Johnson*] liked, was he not?

**Murphy:** Yeah.

**Brown:** He and Evans.

**Murphy:** Yeah.

**FitzPatrick:** Did you have Lyndon?

**Murphy:** One night, one overnight card. He registered, he and his brother Sam both registered the same day, and both took a history course with me, and so, in the post office box I had a set of cards of course awaiting me. And there was Lyndon Johnson's name on one of them, and Sam on another one. And the next morning, there were some more cards in there, and some of them were drop cards. That was the case with everybody, I didn't think anything about receiving drop cards. I didn't regard it as any indication of dislike or anything. It is often necessary to drop a course and take somebody else's. And one of the drop cards was Lyndon Johnson, and Lyndon went straight to Prof Greene and took that same course. And you found out, no doubt, that while he was president that he hadn't read it. (FitzPatrick and Brown laugh.)

**Brown:** Well in an interview you had with some of Emmie's students, you suggested that you always felt there was some kind of connection between Lyndon's interest in Evans and his later behavior, his actions. Did you sort of see something?

**Murphy:** Well, I think Greene taught Lyndon one very valuable thing. A sort of—not only this 'hail fellow well met' sociability that Lyndon would have been severely lacking in had it not been for Greene, and another thing, debate. Greene was a debate teacher; he was an excellent debate teacher. He was, I considered, a very improper history teacher since day after day went by without mention of the day's lesson, or the day's subject in his history class.

**Brown:** He had no—

[35:41]

**Murphy:** They just had a social gathering, had a good time, and did a lot of debating themselves. And I don't think Greene lectured to them much, and they didn't have much class recitation, questions and answer much. So, I was told, I don't know all of them present. But Greene was an excellent debater, and a lot of his students followed his example in that, and I think Lyndon was one of them. I think Lyndon was a good debater. I don't think Lyndon ever cherished any memories whatsoever of any particular writer or topic, or anything like that in the field of history. I never could detect it in him. And Sam, his brother stayed in my class, but he didn't make it.

**Brown:** And did Lyndon's sisters later come here to school too?

**Murphy:** They may have, I don't recall it. Do you know anything about them?

**FitzPatrick:** I don't, no.

**Brown:** Someone mentioned something about them.

**Murphy:** Well they may have, I don't know.

**FitzPatrick:** Could be because that family lived here for a while.

**Murphy:** Yeah, mm huh.

**FitzPatrick:** In fact they lived across from Mother and Dad.

**Murphy:** Soon after Lyndon became president under tragic circumstances, you remember, he was down here on some little trip or other that he was taking, and he was taking a drive through San Marcos, just to refresh some of his old memories. And he passed by Mrs. FitzPatrick's mother's house. And he had thought a great deal of her, so he stopped and got out and went to call on Mrs. Kone. And she wasn't at home--

**FitzPatrick:** No, she was taking a nap!

**Murphy:** Oh, was she?

**FitzPatrick:** She heard somebody knocking, and she said I'm not gonna get up and interrupt my nap, she said, whoever it is will come back (all laugh).

**Murphy:** I never heard her tell that (all laugh). I just supposed she was absent. So, he went back to the car and went on, and later on when she learned who it was, she was very sorry (all laugh). Because I thought that was very sweet of him to drive around, and get out of his car, and go greet people in their homes that he had known here. Not all of them, of course, he couldn't have done that, but some of the very special ones, and her mother was one of the very special ones.

**Brown:** Well, you know, I found out something interesting today that I hadn't known until just now. There is a man who's writing a biography of Johnson, Lyndon, and he has been looking for the newspapers from the period of when Lyndon was the editor of the *Star*, or wrote a column in the *Star*, and those papers have apparently disappeared.

**Murphy:** Oh! I wonder why—

**Brown:** I don't know.

**FitzPatrick:** Well, they're on microfilm—

**Brown:** No, they aren't. The only collection is here, and there is a gap of several—

**FitzPatrick:** Well, that's happened within only the last few years then.

**Brown:** Well, I don't know.

**Murphy:** I never heard that before so it must have happened comparatively recently.

**FitzPatrick:** Yes, because it—well it hasn't been too long ago that somebody did a—

**Brown:** Well of course Emmie and Bill did that book on his formative years but—

**FitzPatrick:** And I'm sure Emmie went through those editorials. And it seems to me like there's been somebody who's been in them since then.

**Brown:** Well, that's just what Hugh Black [*librarian*] was telling me today that they have some gaps in their holdings.

**Murphy:** You suppose somebody took them?

**Brown:** I don't know. Well I suppose they might be worth something I guess—

**Murphy:** Surely nobody could have possibly have even wished to do so let alone succeed in stealing them here and taking them up to the Johnson building in the state university in Austin.

**Brown:** No, I wouldn't think so.

**Murphy:** No, I wouldn't think that would be worth the fall in dignity that it would cost if it was known.

**Brown:** They're so concerned about what they're losing up there anyways.

**FitzPatrick:** Steal fourteen Rembrandt prints.

**Murphy:** For a long, long time, Lyndon lived in an apartment upstairs over the Evans' garage. A carport we call them now-a-days, and he became very devoted to Dr. Evans, and Dr. Evans very much interested in him.

[40:45]

**FitzPatrick:** Do you remember how many students there were here when you came?

**Murphy:** No, I haven't the slightest idea. Of course, during the second World War, when a good many of the faculty were in military service and absent from the campus, and a good many students, too. I imagine it went down a good deal, but they brought down a lot of students from the north that were drafted. And parked, you might say, in colleges that had lost some of their own enrolment because of the war to keep those colleges alive. And that's what they did here, they brought a lot of students from up north. And students came, some of them indignantly—and I didn't blame them—from the University of Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison I believe. And the University of Chicago. Universities like that, they came and had to enroll here as students, and this was just a little ant hill in comparison (laughter) with their institutions, and I wouldn't blame them for being. But I had my largest classes then because of that military addition to them. I had one class with way over a hundred in it.

**Brown:** Oh, my goodness, those were—

**FitzPatrick:** Weren't those classes right after the war, when all of the veterans came back, those were pretty large too, as I remember, weren't they Dr. Murphy?

**Murphy:** Yeah, a lot of them came back.

**FitzPatrick:** That first graduate seminar I had —I was about ten years younger than everybody else. All those men were in there. Thought I was a flibbertigibbet. (Murphy laughs) I probably was.

**Murphy:** Well I hope so, at that time. (all laugh)

**Brown:** Well are there any students that you remember, or have kept in touch with? Or some, like Mary, that you've known through the years, but are there others who moved away, or went on that you remember?

[43:03]

**Murphy:** For a long time, yes, but now—I'm supposed to have been decent enough to die long before now, and most of my ex-students who live away from here suppose that I *am* dead. I certainly should be. I have two cousins, one living in Houston and one out on a lake near my hometown of Mexia, who went to school here and married fellow students here. And they come to see me occasionally. They finished here in the 1940's. Somewhere around [19]48 or [19]49, somewhere like that. And they're about the only ex-students that I'm in close touch with because they come here to see me. One couple was here about three weeks ago. And we went down-- with great to do on my part, to the Heritage House Restaurant and had dinner that Sunday. And Dr. Nolle [*Alfred Nolle, Dean of Faculty*] eats dinner there. Or did, Heritage House is closed now, and so he joined us at the table, so we were treated to a good deal of autobiography (laughter).

**Brown:** What sort of fellow was he, or is he?

**Murphy:** Who, Dr. Nolle? Well, he is a sweet somebody. But I think he takes life pretty seriously.

**FitzPatrick:** Well, I want to tell you I one time I saw him distressed.

**Murphy:** What about?

**FitzPatrick:** When I started back to work on my masters, he discovered that I had graduated with only 121 hours, instead of 124.

**Murphy:** Oh mercy! How'd that happen?

**FitzPatrick:** Well, he added up wrong!

**Murphy:** He had done it!

*End tape, side A*

*Begin tape, side B*

...

(Laughter)

**Murphy:** Exactly

**FitzPatrick:** And he couldn't read it.

**Brown:** He couldn't read it?

**FitzPatrick:** He couldn't read his degree plan. Only she could interpret. Kinda reminded me of the Delphic Oracle. (Laughter.)

**Murphy:** An interpreter! (Laughter continues.)

[00:22]

**Murphy to Brown:** What do you teach?

**Brown:** American History primarily. And—

**FitzPatrick:** He worked with Clark Spence. He did his work with Clark Spence, Mary Lee's husband. Mary Lee Nance.

**Murphy:** Oh! Sure enough. Good!

**FitzPatrick:** I kind of feel like he's an old home.

**Murphy:** Kin to us.

**Brown:** That's right. Well, it's funny. I was looking through the old yearbooks, and I found the pictures of Mary Lee, and she's changed so very little in how she looks.

**FitzPatrick:** That's right.

**Murphy:** Speaking of United States History, did you happen to hear—either of you—happen to hear during the bicentennial long drawn-out celebrations, locally, throughout the country. Any mention, anywhere, in print, or on platform about cause or causes of the revolution?

**FitzPatrick:** No.

**Brown:** No, I don't think so, not that I can remember.

**Murphy:** If I heard anything at all, it was just a brief phrase in passing. No attention paid to it otherwise. Condemning the English for tyranny, or something like that, you know.

**Brown:** No, it wasn't, it was a great deal of public relations, and not very much substance.

**Murphy:** Yes, and if they praised anything that happened in the Revolution, it was mostly the Boston Tea Party. Which I thought was about the low-downest thing, and I thought Sam Adams was much more interested in that than John was.

**FitzPatrick:** Well I'm gonna give up on trying to tell them that the British never taxed the Americans. You know that's all they know. *[They think]* that's that was the reason we had the Revolution, because the mean old British taxed the Americans that— I said no, when they tried to, the Americans wouldn't pay, don't you know that? "Oh ... no." (laughter)

**Murphy:** Yeah, I had one indignant reply on that same thing when I mentioned this absence from the bicentennial. It said it was taxation without representation. And I said, well, a good many loyal subjects of Great Britain could have said that that didn't say it.

**FitzPatrick:** I always like to point out that women have taxation without representation.

**Murphy:** Sure.

**FitzPatrick:** This spring, they said well what—what'd they have to tax? (laughs)

**Murphy:** Oh, lordy, lordy.

**FitzPatrick:** Well Dr. Murphy, you were acting chairman a couple of times, weren't you?

[03:15]

**Murphy:** Oh yes, when Jimmy [Dr. James Taylor, history professor] was gone, he'd pen some papers to me and say, now you tend to this while I'm gone, and sometimes I would have occasion to, and sometimes I wouldn't. I remember when he went out into the Pacific-- was it Bikini? Or where was that? That nuclear experiment, was it nuclear? It was right after the War was over, and he was among those invited out there to that explosion, or whatever it was, and I served then. And that was when some new teachers were coming in, and one of them was Hahn, Cecil Hahn [Chairman of the History Department]. And somebody else, I don't remember. And I had to go over their records, and pass judgement on them and so forth. And I got the shock of my life in Mr.—Dr. Hahn's record from the University of Iowa. He had on there in plain black and white, 26 hours of credit—credit now—26 hours of it, for his doctoral dissertation. Which, to begin with, was an expansion or enlargement of his master's thesis. And I thought, well to give anybody credit for the doctoral dissertation—I thought was an admission of a lack of courses. Wouldn't you think so?

**Brown:** Yeah, they've done that more and more now, I think as part of the way that they get additional money from the legislature.

**Murphy:** Well, I wouldn't doubt it now, but it was a shock to see that.

**Brown:** Yeah, I think they've changed that whole—

**FitzPatrick:** How do they get more money from the legislature?

**Brown:** Well, because the students are on the books more as taking full course loads. In my own case, that's what they—you couldn't graduate, even though you finished all your course work, you couldn't stop registering, until such time as you finished the degree.

**Murphy:** Well possibly I have been insulting to you.

**Brown:** No, no, not at all, but I think you're right.

**Murphy:** You're not guilty of that are you?

**Brown:** Not guilty of what? Oh, I have a lot of credits—thesis credits, but there was a certain amount of course work that you needed to take, and then once you finish that course work—I imagine when you got your doctorate, that once you finished that coursework, then when you turned in your doctorate you got the degree. And you didn't have—they established all of these steps in between where the school gets money or get money because they allege that you're registered and taking courses. Which are fictitious.

**Murphy:** Do you two see in the press today any encouragement whatsoever about the hope of revival of liberal arts before death?

**Brown:** Well, the only thing perhaps is the new Harvard Report. That perhaps will revive it.



**Murphy:** That got good exposure in the press.

**Brown:** Yes, that intended to reemphasize the basics, the sciences and the liberal arts.

**Murphy:** I think people are beginning to see now that high school graduates entering college are deficient in written expression, and that now it's getting worse as they go through college, they remain deficient in it.

**FitzPatrick:** It's hard to try to teach freshman history, and at the same time teach reading and writing.

**Murphy:** Exactly.

[07:11]

**FitzPatrick:** But, Dr. Murphy, do you remember—I think when I was officing with you in 1948, that you said—I've thought about this so much, because it was so much almost a clairvoyant statement of the future—that you said that the future of college education—well public school, and college education—belong to the contractors. (All laugh.) And when you look at the UT system in Austin, and how the contractors just build, build, build, build, build down there at ATM, and even us up here—but you were saying contracting for stadiums and for football equipment, and for—you know. It certainly has been true. And none of that substance for education, or for real teaching.

**Murphy:** No. Well, I'm glad in one sense that I taught as early as I did, even though I'm scandalously old and all that. But I think teachers now are subjected to a good deal of suppression. Not official, and not intended as such, but actual suppression because of the lack of receptive power by the students who come from the high schools. You can talk to some of the high school graduates today in a freshman history course, and if you chose to do so, could just go above their heads entirely and they wouldn't understand what you were talking about, and could(n't) care less.

**Brown:** Yes, the simplest concepts, or what we took to be simple concepts.

**FitzPatrick:** On the structure of government. You know there are just very few of them that understand the structure of our government. They don't understand what Congress is. Me, I would say most of our freshman students don't know what Congress is. And when you've got to stop and explain all that—

**Murphy:** And you wonder if they had anything of the sort in high school.

**FitzPatrick:** No because they—

**Murphy:** Because they're out riding the bus most of the time. (Laughter.) Going down to see the Alamo for instance.

**FitzPatrick:** Or they take them out, as seniors now, they take them out of the classroom at the drop of the hat to have their pictures made. Their pep squad pictures made, football pictures made, they have to have a pep rally, and even—

**Murphy:** And all that's much more important than what you're giving them in the classroom.

**FitzPatrick:** And this TEA thing, this Texas Education meeting went to have a little, very slick brochure they put out—about the first sentence of it says, “The most important aspect of teaching is the teacher.”

**Murphy:** Is the teacher?

**FitzPatrick:** Yes, and I said “Boy, if that isn't crap.” You know the teachers are the last thing anybody pays attention to anymore.

**Murphy:** Exactly.

**FitzPatrick:** And I was out in the High School and poor thing, they're just beat down. Nobody listens to them. When I went out and saw I think you're right about that. It's just terrible.

**Murphy:** I guess they'll just have to go to, not complete, but nearly complete ruin before some reform will set in. I wonder whether the schools in Europe are as vacillating about this and untrue to liberal arts as they are in this country.

**Brown:** No, I don't believe so.

**Murphy:** I don't believe they could be, because so much of what's in the liberal arts came from those areas.

**Brown:** We have very good friends who live in Switzerland, and the schools there are very traditional, they still have that...

[11:34]

**Murphy:** Your mention of Switzerland made me think of a card I had from Sally Bowles, you know Dr. [Ira] Bowles [*music professor*] and his wife, Sally? They're over there looking at sights now, and look was a typical card they sent indicative of their interests in seeing the sights.

**Brown:** Oh, Mozart (laughs).

**FitzPatrick:** And where is this from, Switzerland?

**Murphy:** Uh-huh.

**FitzPatrick:** Salzburg, that's where Shannon [*Merry FitzPatrick's daughter*] was, and she said they don't live in every other house in Vienna. But she really enjoyed the concerts.

**Murphy:** And I just thought wouldn't a couple of music teachers select that card to send. And I thought, why not? That's what they're interested in, and I'm glad to have old Mozart. I don't have any pictures of Mozart.

**Brown:** One thing I noticed in looking through the old yearbooks, was that after World War I, Dr. Arnold [*history professor*] seems to have written a number of poems. Perhaps prompted by the death of his own son [*Jack*] in the war. I think he lost a son in World War 1. Did he take that pretty hard?

**Murphy:** Did he lose a son?

**FitzPatrick:** I don't know, I didn't know that.

**Murphy:** Could be, I didn't get here until 1919. And I don't recall anything about—

**FitzPatrick:** I never did have a course with him Dr. Murphy, where did he do his degree?

**Brown:** I think from the University of Texas.

**Murphy:** In Austin, I think.

[13:18]

**FitzPatrick:** Do you have any impressions of him, about what kind of a teacher he was?

**Murphy:** Well, I thought he was superior to Mr. Greene (laughter). I liked Mr. Greene personally, but I didn't care for him professionally at all, but I thought Dr. Arnold really worked at the job, and he was—I wouldn't say popular, he was more in the beloved list. He was dearly loved by the students that did like him, and I guess a good many did. His classes were normally large.

**FitzPatrick:** What do you remember about Jimmy Taylor [*history professor*] as a teacher?

**Murphy:** Oh, Jimmy Taylor was my hero and yours, too, I guess when he was our chairman. I thought everything he did was just okay, and the wilder they were, the better I liked him.

**FitzPatrick:** Of course, Dr. Taylor wasn't afraid of women, that was one thing. He didn't mind hiring women. In fact, all three women that were there were hired by Dr. Taylor.

**Brown:** Well, there's more than that now, though. At least the permanent ones.

**Murphy:** I remember the first time I ever saw Emmie Craddock; I was—I believe I had an office on the first floor of the Old Main building, and a classroom on the second floor. So, at the close of the class—no, I had an office adjoining the old auditorium.

**FitzPatrick:** Yes, that's the one I shared with you.

**Murphy:** And I was going downstairs from there to the registrar's office on some errand or other, and just as I started down the upper half of the stairway, you know it turns, makes a different direction in midway. I heard someone behind me call my name, and I turned around to see and it was Emmie Craddock. She introduced herself to me. First time I had ever laid eyes on her, and she told me that Dr. Taylor had told her to see me—he was gone out on that Pacific Ocean errand—and about what she wanted here. And so, she and I had several conferences, and of course, I did nothing to discourage her, because I liked her from the first minute I saw her, and her record was good and everything else. So, we just got along fine.

**FitzPatrick:** Did she office with you, too, for a while?

**Murphy:** Uh-huh.

**FitzPatrick:** You just had to put up with all the (laughter) sorts coming through.

**Murphy:** I enjoyed it. I don't think I ever had an office—

**FitzPatrick:** You did Mary Lee too.

**Murphy:** You bet.

**FitzPatrick:** And Betty Brooke.

**Murphy:** Uh-huh. Yes sir, I liked them all. I think Betty Brooke did. I know we were together some every day, and it must've been that way.

[16:21]

**FitzPatrick:** I was remembering that year when I was officing with you and I required book reports, and we required books to be read, and I had them come in and report orally. And that blows my mind now, imagine doing that.

**Murphy:** For you, it took a lot of time, but it ensured more reading.

**FitzPatrick:** Right, it was almost like a tutorial. I can't believe--

**Murphy:** Yes, do you remember those comparatively absurd courses we offered here by correspondence?

**FitzPatrick:** We still do.

**Murphy:** Really?

**FitzPatrick:** Mm-hmm

**Murphy:** Well, we used to have to grade a lot of those papers, and I was reading one woman's paper, she was a teacher somewhere, and was teaching and taking this course for

correspondence. And she had a pretty thick paper. And as I read page after page of it, I thought. "Well, I've seen this before somewhere." And she had accidently left—no doubt hurriedly—left in her paper to mail to me, to the office, some pages from somebody else's paper that she had copied in hers. And that somebody else's paper happened to be, just happened to be one that I had read and marked. As I went along, and it had my marks on it, my comments in the margins, you know. And there was a big part of them there. She must've been very busy, or late at night or something, trying to get the job done, you know, and she was copying someone else's paper. Some friend that had let her have it with their comments and corrections, and all that on it. And her paper wasn't much better than the other one had been, but just the same, it was faithfully copied in some places. And so, I just brought it back down to the office downstairs, where Mr. Woods— not Woodson, whoever was in charge of that thing. The correspondence place and showed him that. So, they dropped her, that is they canceled that course, and they didn't do anything else to her because there wasn't anything else they could do. Poor thing. And I thought I bet a lot of other people did that on correspondence courses.

**FitzPatrick:** Well, you know they do. I grade now—

**Brown:** I graded them in Illinois when I was there, and they would copy right out of the book, page by page.

**Murphy:** Well, who's to keep them from it?

**FitzPatrick:** Then they'll write and say can I get credit on the lessons I do?

**Brown:** That's a side—

**FitzPatrick:** And I'll say "No, you can't." Anybody could be writing these (all laugh).

[19:28]

**Brown:** Well I had two students in correspondence that I still remember. One was a Methodist minister's wife. Who for years, had traveled in Illinois, her husband was a brush firefighter in the Methodist Church. She had just started college, and she had married him, and he had been sent to churches that were having racial troubles. And she was—I was grading a course in what we now call Afro-American or Black History, the study of the black experience, of Black people's experience. And she finished that course and she said "the only thing about this course, is that it leaves me very depressed." She said "because I just don't—I've worked so hard in this area, and I don't really see that we've come very far in all the time that I've spent." She was an interesting one. The other one was a student from San Quinton, and he used to go to the prison library and do tons of research, I guess because he didn't have anything else to do. And papers would come in 150 or 200 pages long, every one was a miniature book—

**Murphy:** Good gracious! It was a task to read, wasn't it?

**Brown:** It was!

**FitzPatrick:** That reminds me, Shannon was tuned in today and we watched for an hour the James Earl Ray hearings, have you been watching?

**Brown:** No, I haven't watched it—

**FitzPatrick:** Oh, it was fascinating! You know, I didn't know they were televising those. We watched it this afternoon live.

(overlapping conversation)

**Murphy:** All I know on TV about it was news accounts of it.

**FitzPatrick:** Well listen, if they have it on tomorrow, watch it because it is just fascinating.

**Murphy:** We will, I surely will. We heard that at the press conference today.

[21:19]

**FitzPatrick:** James Earl Ray has a very feisty lawyer, and he keeps attacking the House Committee as if it was a court, in fact he was trying to— oh it was just ridic— in fact I was so mad that I just got to the point where I said why is the chairman being so polite to that idiot. It is not a trial, the man had already been convicted. As I told Shannon, as a means of government operation, I was just fascinated with it.

**Murphy:** Well at the stage it's in now, I sometimes think that if it continues in this frame of mind, so to speak, and Ray's lawyers chose to do so, they could start proceedings requesting a new trial for him, couldn't they?

**FitzPatrick:** Well, I'm sure that's what they hope. He's requested it of course, he's changed his story quite a bit now (laughter).

**Murphy:** I'll say he had. I always had a theory of a conspiracy about Kennedy's death in Dallas, long before there was any public mention of it. I can't recall the family name of the owners, the chief owners of the *Dallas Morning News*. It's an old North Carolina family that my mother knew, and my father. They were both from North Carolina. And they're prominent people in Dallas, and one member of that family, I can't recall the name of it—

**FitzPatrick:** Oh, isn't it ridiculous, me either.

**Murphy:** It's a familiar name, though.

**FitzPatrick:** Dealey.

**Murphy:** Yeah that was it. Something like that anyway, I believe you're right. And the *Dallas Morning News* had been filled ever since Kennedy had campaigned for the presidency, and continued throughout his presidency, with bitter opposition to him. And dislike of him, and contempt of him in its editorial pages. So much so that we thought it was extreme. We didn't

think Kennedy was any terrific monster, or saint either. But we didn't think that that constant warfare on him in the *Dallas News* was becoming. And we had become so disgusted with it that my father had dropped it and we were taking instead the *Houston Chronicle*. And when this happened, it was all over, and Oswald was killed by Ruby, and then somebody killed Ruby, and I thought that's just this fellow—he hated Kennedy with such passion, that he was employing these mentally deficient men in turn, and had planned it so that one of them would kill Kennedy, or with assistance kill him. And then the other one would then kill him. And that's what happened. And then he had somebody else kill this other one, and then he himself died and was buried with great pomp and circumstance by the Episcopal Church there in Dallas to which he belonged. So, he never was called in question. But I thought from the day after the murder—no not the day after, but after Ruby was disposed of—that that had happened, and it could have. But there wouldn't be any point in investigating it now. With all the participants in it dead, safely dead.

**Brown:** Well, I think we're about out of questions. May do you have any?

**FitzPatrick:** No.

**Brown:** We've surely appreciated your time.

**Murphy:** Well, you didn't get a bit of information.

**Brown:** Well, we did, we got some new things.

**Murphy:** Well, I had a very happy visit (laughter).

**Brown:** Well, we did too, we enjoyed it very much. And you wouldn't mind if we put a copy of this tape in the archives of the university.

**Murphy:** Well, I didn't get a statement.

**Brown:** No, I know you didn't (laughter).

**Murphy:** You mean you're gonna write one and put it in there?

**Brown:** Yes, we'll just put the tape in as a part of the things in the collection.

**Murphy:** Oh, you were recording all that was said? Oh mercy—(laughter). I'm glad I didn't know that.

**Brown:** No, I don't think you said anything that—

**FitzPatrick:** No, I think you were very circumspect (all laugh).

**Brown:** Perhaps you spent too much time with Dr. Evans (all laugh).

**Murphy:** I told him off after I was free. I told you about that when he nearly bumped his head—

**FitzPatrick:** Tell Ron.

[26:49]

**Murphy:** Well, it's a really insignificant incident. I was in President Flower's office copying some stuff that I was supposed to copy at a long table, and I sat very close to a filing cabinet that still belonged to Dr. Evans and was full of his material, he hadn't moved it out yet. And he came in there to get something from it, while I was there at the table sitting by it. And we greeted each other, then he went about his business of search and I about mine of copying. And he started at the top drawer of that file and looked through it and didn't find it. Then he left it open and pulled another one open further and went on down to the bottom. And meanwhile, had been compelled to close some of them, because he couldn't get to the bottom drawers if he didn't, but he never did close that top one. And he was squatting down there on the floor at the bottom drawer getting some papers out of it that he'd at last found. And when he finished, he just rose without moving back, and I just reached out and grabbed him and pulled him out from under it to escape the bump on the head which would've been painful, if not more serious. And he thanked me, of course, when he saw why I had done that, and I said "Well of course. I've often wanted to bash your head in myself, but I wasn't gonna sit here and let you do it".

(Laughter.)

*End of tape, side B.*