Interview with Merry Kone FitzPatrick

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Begin Tape 1, Side 2

Iris T. Schumann: Professor FitzPatrick, we’re back together again today, where we left off at our last session we talked about some of your high school activities. I wonder if you would like to comment on your graduation and then move on into what happened to you as you eventually became a student at Southwest Texas State Teachers College.

Merry Kone FitzPatrick: Well, I graduated in May 1939. And we had a big celebration after graduation, and I stayed out all night, and my mother was really angry. I’d never done such a thing before or since, I might say. I started to school—to Southwest Texas in the fall of 1939. Dr. Evans was president at that time. I think the enrollment was about 2,500. I would like to comment on some of the teachers. You mentioned Dr. Houston. I had Sue Taylor first for English. I had Dr.—and she was a wonderful teacher. And I had Dr. Ralph Houston, who was a superb teacher. He was as good as anybody whom I’ve ever had. I had Dr. Retta Murphy for whom this building is named. And the first day I tell my students this story: the first half of American History I had Professor Green of infamous notoriety. He liked big loopy answers, and he liked you to flow when you answered, and so I made an A the first semester. And then the second half I had Dr. Retta Murphy, who liked very precise detail, and I made an F on the first paper I handed in. And I was shocked to my very bones, but I learned what she wanted, and I made an A—I had to overcome a lot. I had her for several classes, and then I had her as a graduate professor. Not only I but others commented, we felt that she had know. She really cared about the people who had lived, and she made them come alive for you.

I had Verna Deckert in art and Miss Lazenby in art. I was an art major. This was during the war, during the war years, even though Pearl Harbor doesn’t come on until ’41, many people were already leaving. My older brother had joined the service in 1941, I guess, and others were leaving. In fact, one of the young men that I’d dated when I was a freshman decided that he would sign up, he graduated the year I started. He was a senior. He played basketball, his name was Fritz Lehnoff, and he was captain of the basketball team. When he graduated that year, he said, “I’m going to go in, get my year over with.” So—at that time he signed up for a year.
Schumann: What year was that?

FitzPatrick: 1940. So he was in for seven years, six-and-a-half—something like that. Dr. Evans took the position that if you were a teacher, you could teach anything. So he just shuffled people around, and I had the Spanish teacher who was teaching math—algebra, and he was terrible. A nice man and a good Spanish teacher but terrible in math. And I had come up to major in math. He just confused me so that I changed my major to art. (Long sigh) Pearl Harbor occurred, of course, while I was in the university—Southwest Texas State Teachers College then.

Schumann: What happened as far as the reaction on the campus to the war?

FitzPatrick: Just lots and lots of young men left and joined the service. In fact, my first husband left. He was a football player, and his name was Deroy Miller. He left and joined the Air Force. Then I graduated in 1942, and I got a job in San Antonio in the censorship office at the post office across from the Alamo. My big job was to open the envelopes, (laughs) for which I got a civil service position—$105 a month, and by the time they took out social security and income tax, I think I took home $85. I lived in a lovely house; four of us from Southwest Texas lived in that home in San Antonio. People were asked to open their homes to war workers and service personnel, and I paid $25 a month for room and board. I lived pretty high on the hog! I bought bonds as I remember. That $50 went a long way. Then I got married. I went to Florida, where my husband was a pilot by that time, and he was sent to India, and those men flew the Hump—flew transport goods into China. Twenty-one of them went with his group—nineteen of them were killed! They simply flew them to death. They concentrated on Europe to finish that war, and they just forgot those guys over there. Deroy said they would fly sometimes as long as eighteen hours a day. I’m sure a lot of it was pilot fatigue. He crashed on the side of a mountain with his best friend. There were four of them in the plane—the pilot, co-pilot, and the navigator, and I don’t know who else. My brother—my older brother was stationed in India at that time too, he was in depot supply, and when he got leave, he went up that mountain and got those bodies and brought them back. And wrote all four families.

Schumann: An awful thing to have to do. A very brave thing for him to do.

FitzPatrick: I know, right. I can’t imagine anyone doing it. I mean he didn’t have to go do that, but anyway.

Schumann: He felt he did.

FitzPatrick: Anyway. So, then that was in June—Deroy was killed in June of ’44, and I worked—I had been working a little. Southwest Texas trained navigators here in San Marcos, and I’d been working out at the airfield. I didn’t want to stay out there. I had a boss, oh, he was awful! The man who had the contract to run the air thing here was one of the—oh gosh, big oil family in Texas, J. Marion West. He’d bought his contract so he could—so his henchmen could
stay out of the service and wouldn’t have to serve. His name was Foe Lawrence, I remember him because he was chasing me around the desk all of the time. Anyway, I wanted to leave, so I went and taught in Virginia one-half year with a friend of mine who was teaching in a deaf school over there, and I taught twelve-year-olds. They’d been in school—I think it was fourth grade because they were in school several years to learn basic skills; anyway, it was a beautiful place, Staunton, Virginia. I loved that, but I decided I didn’t want to do that either, so I came home, and I got a teaching assistantship in the art department with Mrs. Deckert. At that time you couldn’t major in art, so I majored in history and minored in art.

Schumann: Why couldn’t you major in art?

FitzPatrick: They didn’t have a graduate program in art.

Schumann: Oh, I see!

FitzPatrick: Well, that’s when I met Dr. James Taylor, fresh back from the war. He’d been a colonel, and he was one of the few PhDs on campus here. So, I had the two that this building is named for—Taylor and Murphy. He really was the most stringent teacher I ever had in my life. The first semester I had, I was twenty-five, I guess, and everybody else in the room was older than I was. These were returning veterans, and they’d had lots of experiences, they’d been around the world, and they had a lot of military talk between Taylor and them. The first seminar I had with Dr. Taylor, I gave my paper first, and he absolutely took the hide off of me. It was—I still shake with horror! Oh, he just picked on me, as I thought. And then it seemed to me that he didn’t pick on the rest of those guys very much, and I really hated him with a passion. But then as time went on, I realized I was the only one he cared about. He was just writing the rest of them off, and he wanted me to do good. (Laughs) So once I realized that, things got better.

Schumann: That’s interesting. Now, this was right after the war?

FitzPatrick: This was in ’46–’47. And as I said, Dr. Taylor and Dr. Murphy were co-, they weren’t first and second reader on this thesis, they were co-readers. And what one did not pick up, the other did. In my first rough draft on my first chapter of my thesis, I split an infinitive. I have never split an infinitive again. I’m very conscious of it. Anyway, so I finished that in ’47—in the summer of ’47. My thesis was on Rasputin. I remember that I was very fortunate to find some police reports published in the English newspaper, the Manchester Guardian. Anyway, I had some really good material.

I finished in the summer of ’47, and Dr. Taylor wanted me to teach here because it was really—we had all these veterans coming back, and he was having a dickens of a time getting teachers, and I told him I didn’t want to teach here. He badgered me all summer. He would say, “I’ll give you one more chance, say yes or no.” I’d say, “No.” And he just kept on and on and he offered me $2,400. He said—he must have asked me ten times—and he’d say, “Yes or no,” and I’d say,
“No.” And he’d wait a while longer. I didn’t want to stay because I knew how stupid I was and how little I knew. He then raised the offer $200 to $2600. He said, “Do you realize this is for nine months, not twelve months?” Actually, I hadn’t known that so I decided to try it, and that first year of teaching was the most miserable year of my life because everybody in the room was older than I was, or so it seemed. I was teaching World History, and I felt so ignorant. And I was. I was moaning one day, we had a man who was head of the education department a long time, and he was such a nice man—Dr. Lloyd Rogers. And I was telling him how awful I felt. He said, “Never underestimate the ignorance of a freshman!” And you know that helped from then on out. I might not know much but they knew less than I did. So, I tell my young teachers that sometime. Even though you don’t know much, you know more than they do. (Laughs) That’s what I tell them.

Schumann: What was the history department like at the time? How many people approximately were there on the staff?

FitzPatrick: Well, it was not a history department. It was the social science division. Dr. Taylor had economics under him, and by the way, I wish economics was back over here in Liberal Arts. We really need the old traditional economics. I’m sure they need business economics too, but I wish we had the old traditional economics, but that doesn’t matter, it’s my opinion. They had government and history, sociology and geography.

Schumann: That was all part of the social science division?

FitzPatrick: Yes, and Dr. Taylor was head of that division. Now, Dr. Flowers was president by that time. I’ve forgotten when he came.

Schumann: He came just after the war started.

FitzPatrick: ’44?

Schumann: ’42, I believe.

FitzPatrick: Yes. I think he came the year I left. Anyway, Dick Henderson joined us then. He took a master’s degree here, but he taught in the political science department, and then he went off and got his degree—I think the University of Maryland. Clarence Schultz taught with us then. He taught sociology. He went off to teach history at a junior college for a long time, and then he came back here after he got his PhD in sociology and [has]been here ever since. He was the outstanding teacher last year at Southwest Texas.

Dr. Murphy was here. I officed with her. She told me to call her Retta. I could never do that. My daughter, when she was an undergraduate at A&M, called all of her professors by their first name, and now she’s a graduate student at Texas University and she calls all professors by their first name, and I said, “Don’t do that!” She said, “I asked them. I told them my mother teaches at
Southwest Texas, and she wouldn’t let anybody call her by—students call her by the first name.” Her teacher said, “I’m not your mother. Call me Pat.” So!

Schumann: A new trend.

FitzPatrick: I know, so I asked our two young women in our department we have this year—Leah and Linda, and they said we allow our students to call us by our first name if they want to. Somehow that slipped up on me. I guess nobody dared do that.

Let’s see, who else. Mary Lee Nance came before I left. She is married to Clark Spence, and they are co-professors at the University of Illinois. Betty Brook Eakle Dobkins, she was a Webb Scholar and taught here for a while when I was here. She is teaching in Tulsa now. Notice that I am mentioning women. Do you know that Dr. Evans—I want to credit him with that, he was never afraid—and Dr. Flowers, right behind him, were not afraid to hire women.

Schumann: And that was somewhat unusual?

FitzPatrick: Yes. I think at Texas University, they still only have token women to this day in the history department. They don’t hire women—if they can help it. They’ve been forced to hire one or two.

[Editor’s note: An interruption in the conversation caused Professor FitzPatrick to lose her line of thought. In the next conversation she is again referring to Southwest Texas State College/University.]

FitzPatrick: I think that’s to their credit. The English department’s always had a good sprinkling of women. Math department, of course languages, education. Not so much in the sciences, but I think they would have hired them if they’d been available. I mean that isn’t why they didn’t hire them. So, I think that’s to the credit of Southwest Texas. They’ve never been bad. They haven’t been great. You don’t have any administrators. We didn’t, of course, we do today. Mr. Hardesty is obviously not afraid of hiring women in administrative posts, so—and I think for young women going to school, it’s good to have role models—women professors.

Schumann: I agree. Southwest is kind of a pioneer in that direction, do you think?

FitzPatrick: Well, you know, I just took it for granted always that this is the way everybody was, since that was our milieu, it didn’t even occur to me until I started graduate work at UT–Austin, then I really ran into it, bang-up, slap-dab.

I taught two years; I taught here in ’47–’48 and ’48–’49. I married my second husband here, and he had been in the service, and he was back to go to school. He went one semester here, and that’s when I met him, and then he went to the University of Texas and graduated as an architect.
And we were in school—I took some graduate courses and worked up there. You know, we lived several places, and he was killed. He went—

_Schumann:_ What was his name?

_FitzPatrick:_ McCall FitzPatrick. I feel like I’ve worked all my life, all my adult life. I was teaching. He and another friend opened an architect’s office in El Campo, and he was there three years, and I taught the three years necessary, by the way, for me to be a supervisor at Southwest Texas, in public school. I taught three years there. It was really a wonderful school system. If you could program the way you want a school system to be, that was a wonderful school system there. The principal was moved up to superintendent, named Mr. Thigpen, and he just went all-out to get the community behind the schools. If he heard a breath of criticism anywhere he immediately contacted that person, brought him up, asked, Is this the teacher you were fussing about? You all talk it over and see what’s wrong. He just wouldn’t let sores fester. He’d back the teachers—you know, he wanted to make sure the teachers were not being maligned or if he felt there was a problem, [and] then he would talk to them and try to get it ironed out and get it open, get it over with. And I just never was in a school where I felt that the teachers felt so good about themselves.

Almost I can go into a school today when I supervise student teachers and tell the mood of the school. It’s just a feeling you have whether they are happy with the bosses or not.

_Schumann:_ During that period, what did the campus look like—building-wise? Social science was in Evans?

_FitzPatrick:_ Yes. I taught in Evans, and there’s been building going on during this—since I’ve been going up here. And you may have heard, there are a lot of Dr. Murphy stories about, but one of the most famous is—this is about 1946 or ’47. They were tearing up the Quad, as usual, and jackhammers were going full blast, and it was disturbing her classroom, and she marched out the door and went out to the man and said, “You go in and teach my class, and I’ll hold the jackhammer!” (Laughs) He shut it off and didn’t start again until she was through. Really, building—that’s all I remember about this campus, is its being torn up.

_Schumann:_ I understood a lot of building did not take place that should have, not only through the Depression but then through the war years, and so that perhaps they got behind in the building process. Did you say that or someone said that to me?

_FitzPatrick:_ Well, they got behind in the public school. I think they had plenty of space during the war years. One of the things they did during the war years when the enrollment dropped to just almost nothing, they farmed out the teachers to public schools; I know Miss Deckert went down and taught art in Corpus, and others did too. Mr. Clayton has some stories about having some of the college professors teach him in San Marcos High School, and there was one
particularly irate professor who taught math and said he couldn’t control the class, he wasn’t
used to controlling high school kids, so he couldn’t and didn’t. One day, he just threw up his
hands and said, “Bedlam! Bedlam!” and walked out and didn’t come back. (Laughs)

Schumann: Too much for him!

FitzPatrick: Yes. Anyway, Old Main was here, of course. The Art Building and Lueders Hall,
the Science Building, Flowers Hall, Evans Auditorium.

Schumann: Now this is the second Science Building. There was an older one that had been torn
down by this time, I’m sure.

FitzPatrick: Well, that one was there, and, of course, the Education Building, that’s now the
Psychology Building. Now, when I was an undergraduate, those buildings were here. When you
walk down the street from when Flowers is now, these were all boarding houses. All the way
down LBJ Street, these would—

Schumann: Toward town?

FitzPatrick: Toward town. And there was a little café there called Galbraith’s Café. The
students would eat hamburgers, and that was a place where a lot of people hung out. (Chuckle)
As I think I mentioned last time, of course Sewell Park was very much an important part of the
activities. Everybody took swimming for PE as long as the weather would allow you to take it,
whether you wanted to or not.

Schumann: By this time when you came back to campus, had Sewell Park been improved with
the cement structures around the side of the river?

FitzPatrick: Yes, you know Mr. Clayton said that his father—he worked on the grounds and
then he taught IA for a year before he was killed, but he was responsible—he was in charge of
putting a lot of that, those banks—embankments in the river.

Schumann: It was done by this time.

FitzPatrick: Yes.

Schumann: Done before the war, then?

FitzPatrick: Yes, because Mr. Clayton was killed in 1936, I think.

Schumann: So they were done very early.

FitzPatrick: I was trying to think. What are some of the activities we did as an undergraduate?
They had what they called then—you call them sororities now, but they called them literary
societies, and I was a Shakespeare. And because the tradition was that “townies” always were Shakespeares, I was not necessarily inclined that way, but that’s what it turned out I was.

Schumann: Townies! That’s interesting. Is that what they called those who lived in town?

FitzPatrick: Yes. It was kind of a snobby organization. Let’s see, Philadelphians were another group. I can’t remember. I really wasn’t much into that stuff a whole lot. I’m not big on that. But it was fun. It was nice; we had nice things. One of the things I remember too that we had on campus was that in the early thirties, you know when I was here ’39 or ’40, ’41—NYA had a tearoom. You know, the National Youth Administration were training young men and women, mostly women, to be waiters and waitresses, and we had a tearoom where they worked, and we got absolutely wonderful food for not very much. I mean, you could get tea and cookies and cakes and buns and stuff that they had prepared, and then they’d serve it beautifully.

Schumann: I didn’t realize that the NYA did—went into that kind of activities. I knew that the NYA was in machinist-type work here on campus because we have photographs of that. That’s interesting. Where was the tearoom located?

FitzPatrick: It was in the bottom of the, on the bottom floor of the Science Building. And on the bottom floor—that’s another thing, the state furnished all state colleges and universities free textbooks. And that’s where the textbook library was.

Schumann: So this is one of the reasons that education was so very affordable to a wide range of folks.

FitzPatrick: Yes. Yes. You know, I did that study on San Marcos in the early thirties and did the research from the archives here and the newspapers. They were going to close down Southwest Texas, and Dr. Evans fought like mad to save it and did save it. But in 1933, it cost an average of $35 a semester to go here.

Schumann: Unbelievable.

FitzPatrick: Yes. But you see, if you don’t have to pay for your textbooks and you don’t pay lab fees and you don’t have all the fees that they pay today, it was cheap. Then I think you could get room and board for as little as $15 a month, so that he proved this was one of the cheapest places to go to school in the state. Of course, that isn’t what the state paid but that’s what the students were out of pocket. These boarding houses were all over. These houses were here and up there on the hill from this building, and this was the way it was. I guess there weren’t any dormitories when I started school.

Schumann: Were there families that had the boarding houses, or were they more likely to be widows or ladies who were doing this to actually earn their total income?
FitzPatrick: They were both. They were really both. I know some families that I knew, and there were a lot of widows that, of course, did it too. But there were families. I had some friends that stayed in some of them. The first dormitory I think was Brogdon Hall, I’m not sure about it, but it was over there where the Student Union is now. That was, I think, the first dormitory—women’s dormitory. My father, of course, I told you he was born here, but when he was a young man, the young women at the university, at this school could not be seen riding in a car with any man, including their father or brother, unless they were bringing them to school or taking them away. If the family came over here to see their child, a young woman could not be seen riding in the car with them. And my father was a kind of a sparky young blade, I guess, and he and some of his friends took some of the girls riding, and he got in trouble, and his name was put on a “black list” for taking girls riding in a car. (Laughs)

Schumann: It really was a controlled society at that time. Oh my goodness!

FitzPatrick: And of course, they couldn’t—well, when I started to school, girls could not smoke in the dormitory or boarding houses. They had a curfew. I think the curfew was 9:00 on weeknights, and I’ve forgotten what it was on weekends—but maybe 11:00 or 12:00. Anyway, pretty stringent rules. But even when I came back here in 1961, and I came back to take the place of Dr. Kissler, who was going to be gone for a year. My husband had been killed, and Dr. Taylor asked me to come back temporarily while she was gone. She had come here, by the way, to take the place of Dr. Craddock, who was going off the school, and she stayed. And then Dr. Craddock came back, and then Dr. Kissler wanted to go off and finish her coursework on her PhD, so they asked me to come. I stayed. But anyway, at that time we had a limit on how far off the ground the girls’ skirts could be, and we had a Dean of Women who had a ruler that she whipped out and measured [a] skirt’s length.

Schumann: It must have been a very small student body to be responsible for the length of skirts.

FitzPatrick: Well, 3,200 of us when I came back.

Schumann: When you returned here what changes—this is in 1963—

FitzPatrick: 1961.

Schumann: 1961. In 1961, what changes were evident? Had the history department been separated from the social science division?

FitzPatrick: No, because Dr. Dick Henderson came after Jimmy had multiple-sclerosis, Dr. Taylor, and died in ’63 or ’64, I’m not sure. 1963, and then Dick Henderson became chairman of the social science division. And I think it was two or three years after this, about ’66 or ’67, and then they split it up, and he went on to be chairman of the political science department.
Schumann: And this is when the big growth was beginning to take place.

FitzPatrick: Yes.

Schumann: On the campus?

FitzPatrick: Yes. As I said, 3,200 when I came back, and Dr. Flowers, who died in ’64, said, “We will never see this campus get as big as five thousand.” And that didn’t sound so silly to me. I mean, five thousand seemed like a lot. But then we just had this crunch of students by ’66, ’67. That’s the baby boom years. Those are the returning servicemen and families were back together, and they wanted a family, and they’d been [separated], so we had really a lot [of their children.] Then Korea, we had a lot of Korean veterans who also came back to school on the GI Bill, so we had two groups of veterans, and then, of course, I think the growth in the last five years has more to do with the Sun Belt—people moving into the Sun Belt area. So we’ve grown, all around, not just the school, but the population.

Schumann: Tell me a little about your responsibilities as supervisor of student teachers. So when did you take on that responsibility?

FitzPatrick: I did that from the beginning—from 1961 when I came back. As I said, to do this, by state requirement, you have to have three years of public school experience—you must have three years, that’s obligatory. That’s what I’ve got, three years. However, I had taught in private school. I taught in Hockaday in Dallas one year. And I had taught at the deaf school, so I had had teaching experience. They don’t count that. The law does not count if you’ve taught in a private school. You have to have public school teaching. So, that’s not easy to find—a college teacher who has had public school teaching. In fact, we lost a few supervisors several years ago when they tightened up on that. Particularly today, young people who’ve aimed at a goal of being a college teacher don’t normally have public school experience. Anyway, I had it, and that’s why I got the job, and I think Jimmy Taylor also wanted to help me and, as he said, he liked to hire women because he got twice as much work out of them. (Laughs)

Schumann: I believe that. Well, tell me what you do as a student teacher supervisor.

FitzPatrick: Well, I would like to say that Dr. Kissler was brought here to start this program. She worked with Dr. Lloyd Rogers, and we are really very unique in that subject matter people supervise student teachers. I supervise history, and that’s social studies, and people in math supervise the math people. In most schools, education professors do this. And so it is kind of unusual. I came back, well, that was one of my duties, and I taught history also. The first year, I remember I had six that fall of 1961—six student teachers, and all were in San Marcos. And I also taught a methods course, and we worked very closely with San Marcos Public Schools. And then we got so big at one time, Mr. Clayton, Dr. Kissler, and I worked together for years and years and years, you know. At the peak years, we had as many as eighty a semester or eighty-
five. Obviously, San Marcos couldn’t absorb so many, and they began to go out of town. We then went to New Braunfels and Kyle. We’ve always gone to Hays. Hays has a good school system, I think. Next thing we knew, we were in Austin and San Antonio and Victoria. I’ve gone to Victoria.

Schumann: About when did this branching out, away from San Marcos, take place?

FitzPatrick: In the late sixties. I really do like it. It’s not everybody’s cup of tea. Some people look down on it as inferior to the pure college teacher, but I like it because I like contact with the outside world, number one. I like to see what our end-product is, and I feel that public schools should be the business of everybody. I wish they had to go out there and take their stint. I have a young man now finishing his student teaching who told us this week he had planned to teach and go to law school at night. He said, “I had no idea in the world that you worked so hard being a teacher.” He said, “There is no way that I can teach fulltime and go to law school.” He said, “It takes all my time, and I’m exhausted.” I said, “Yes, and people need to know that, what teachers have to go through in public school.” And there’s some good teaching going on out there, and it is not the teachers’ fault that there is stumbling going on on the way to ivied halls. I don’t know just what it is, but there is good teaching.

Schumann: There are as many opinions of what it is as there are folks out there expounding on the subject. (Laughs) The supervisor is assigned these students, or does the department have a part in actually placing a student in a given school situation?

FitzPatrick: No. Dr. Jerry Thomas is our Director of Student Teaching. Now, he’s in the Education Department. And all he can do—and I don’t see how he does it, he has four or five hundred a year, you know. Of course, that’s all of the elementary all the way up, and he has to contact the schools and ask them if they will take somebody in history or geography or political science. And they can either say yes or no. Until this year, the teachers in the school got $200 a year for having a student teacher. Now they get nothing. Theoretically that was because they got such a big raise last year that they should be happy to do this free, well, hum—they’re not!

Schumann: Actually in many instances, their salaries didn’t change, did they?

FitzPatrick: No. Especially if you didn’t get on career ladder. Most districts could only fund the mandated third, when maybe two-thirds were qualified.

Schumann: So this could run into a problem for years, down the road?

FitzPatrick: It has already. We’ve had schools turn us down this year, and we’ve never had that before. So, I think some of the schools are just saying, Well, why should be bother? However, let me say that it does count as part of your career ladder perks, what do you call it? Whatever you do to get on the career ladder. Having a student teacher is one of the things that can help.
**Schumann:** Marks that you have?

**FitzPatrick:** Yes. Also, if you have a good student teacher and know how to use them, they can be very useful in record-keeping and paper work, grading papers, recording and all that. In fact, I had one teacher in Seguin this time who said, “I don’t know what I am going to do when you leave,” because he had helped her a great deal.

**Schumann:** There is a rapport, perhaps, that’s developed between a teacher and a student, if it happens to work that way.

**FitzPatrick:** Yes.

**Schumann:** They really do have to get along.

**FitzPatrick:** And actually, they do mostly. The personality conflicts that we have, which are bound to happen once in a while, are very few and far between. But you can’t help that. It’s going to happen.

**Schumann:** I wonder if—I don’t want to take you away from talking about this if there is anything you can add.

**FitzPatrick:** I don’t think there is anything else.

**Schumann:** I wonder if you’d comment on some personalities here, some folks that have been on campus. You’ve already mentioned a few, but one person that stands out in my mind that I have heard about and I know little or nothing about was Ben the Tamale Man. Do you have any recollections of him? His photograph was in the newspaper, oh, back in the— I don’t know where, when. Was he on campus at any time when you were here?

**FitzPatrick:** No, but when I was a little girl. He had an old basket that he had slung over his shoulder, on his back, and he would walk up and down the streets of San Marcos and he had a cry. He called, “Maalees!” and when they heard that, people would go out and buy his tamales because they were real good—my dad just loved them; although the joke was, of course, that he made them out of dogs. But I think that was the joke that people made in those days. And he went, and I’m sure he sold them to college students. I don’t remember him particularly on campus, but I do remember him. He just seemed to me he was one of those people who were here, and there was another even funnier man. San Marcos was full of, and very tolerant of, eccentrics. People that had mentally-deficient children kept them at home, and the town kind of looked after them, and they wandered the streets.

This was part of life, and this funny, funny man—I wish, you should get Mr. Clayton to tell you more stories that I can, but his name was Ben Sacket. And he was kind of—he was a little bitty man, and he was very, very eccentric and slow-witted in one way but also very sharp in other
ways. And I think he was a son of one of the rich, rich Houston families. I think a Westheimer. And I think they parked him in San Marcos to have some place to park him. He didn’t work, but he would just wander around. He had money, what he wanted. I mean he had money to live on. He didn’t live rich by any means. And I may have this wrong, but I think it was Westheimer, and I think Westheimers had the building that turned into Brown School. Some rich family owned that house up there. Then Brown School bought it, and I think Ben Sacket was—Mr. Clayton has so many funny stories about things he said, and being a boy in San Marcos, he had more opportunity to be around men telling those stories than I would as a girl.

And then we had a man in San Marcos named Edwin Waller who was mentioned in Ripley’s “Believe it or Not” one time because he ran for public office every year for whatever office was going: governor, or constable, or J.P. For thirty-something, five years, he ran for office, and he never won one.

Schumann: Oh, that’s sad.

FitzPatrick: And his—he’d had a grandfather who had been a state senator, and with that illusion of grandeur, he ran and ran for office. Edwin Waller. You know Waller, Texas? That was named for his family, but he never won anything. He always ran.

Schumann: Let’s shift the gears a little bit to some of the folks on campus who were the movers and shakers. How about Dean Speck. Was he on campus when you were here?

FitzPatrick: Yes.

Schumann: Did you have any contact with him at all?

FitzPatrick: Well, he was Dean of Men, and therefore I didn’t have a lot of contact with him, except that his daughter was in my group—of The Thirteen. Mattie Sue Speck and they were Church of Christ—big church of Christ. I’m Presbyterian, so we didn’t have much contact that way either.

Schumann: Not on campus?

FitzPatrick: Not on campus. I really didn’t have much contact with him.

Schumann: You’ve mentioned James Taylor. What about Dr. Craddock? You’ve also mentioned her, but you haven’t said too much about her.

FitzPatrick: Is she being interviewed, I hope?

Schumann: I’m sure. I think we don’t say as much about ourselves though as other people might say.
**FitzPatrick:** Of course, she is an incredible person.

**Schumann:** What about her influences on this department.

**FitzPatrick:** What I was going to comment, you know she was in the Navy. She started teaching in public school, and then she joined the Navy and achieved, I think, one of the highest ranks, and I don’t know what that was—they didn’t go very high, any of them during the war—Lieutenant Commander maybe, I’ve forgotten exactly. But anyway, after the war, she came back and decided she wanted to get a PhD in history, and so she moved to Austin, she and her mother. Her mother kept house for her, and Emmie started teaching over here, and I don’t know the date because I wasn’t here when she came, but I knew her, I had met her. Then when I came back to teach, of course, she was teaching here. It wasn’t too long after that, when I came back, that she was asked to establish the Honors Program here. So she is responsible for the direction that the Honors Program has taken. I went one time to the National Honors Convention when it met in St. Louis and probably every department in every school in the whole world has a different honors program. Nobody has the same pattern, and I think ours works wonderfully well. The students take at least four courses in honors and do a thesis in their senior year. What I like about it is that we have—I have students from all over the campus, that is I have art majors and chemistry majors and business majors and P.E. majors, occasionally, and a few liberal arts sprinkled in there, and these students become very close to each other. I have noticed that they form a kind of core of camaraderie that is different from anything else. Mr. Hardesty always gives an honors dinner for the students in the program in the fall, and we had one this fall, of course, and twelve of my thirteen were there, and they were together, just like a little covey of quail. I think that’s one of the really good aspects of this program. I’ve just had one do a thesis with me, and she did a study of Stephen F. Austin in the years he was in Mexico City in prison. When she finished, she said, “If I’d known how much work it was, I’d never have done it.” She went immediately to a master’s and PhD program at the University of Florida. And she said, “Oh, thank goodness I did it because I already knew about research when I started, and I was already a year ahead of most of the people there.”

**Schumann:** It’s a terrific program.

**FitzPatrick:** I think it is.

**Schumann:** Dr. Craddock is credited then—

**FitzPatrick:** With the form and pattern of it. Then, of course, Dr. Brown took over, and I think he’s done a really good job of carrying on as I think she would like it. I think he tries to be true to her ideal of what she wanted. Of course, it’s helped by the scholarship—Craddock Scholarship. You will probably hear this but she, one day they called her and said, What do you want to do with this $1000 that’s been given in your name? And she said, “What $1000?” Have you heard this?
**Schumann:** No.

**FitzPatrick:** And it turns out this Joe Green who runs this foundation had given $1000 to establish a scholarship in her name. Well, now it’s $100,000. And he’s an old friend of Dr. Craddock’s.

**Schumann:** Oh, for heaven’s sake!

**FitzPatrick:** And she, I mean she really hasn’t been in contact with him for a long time. His wife is a very lovely lady, too. Just over the last seven or eight years, he just dumped a $25,000 or a $10,000. He’s got it up now to $100,000, and I guess that will be the end of it, but we do have that money now for the Craddock Scholarship, too, and you don’t have to be in the Honors Program to get it, but it helps.

**Schumann:** Wonderful! Well, we’re drawing to the end of our taping session. I had mentioned Froggy Sewell and the river, and we’ve touched on him a bit.

**FitzPatrick:** Gosh, I’d forgotten he was called “Froggy.”

**Schumann:** Who were the other presidents that—with whom you may have had some contact while you were here on campus? Any that you had any particularly close association with?

**FitzPatrick:** Well, McCrocklin followed Flowers. He was, of course, got in a bit of trouble, but he was a good president. He was a good schoolman. He understood the classroom teacher because he had been a teacher. And I’m sorry the trouble he got into. But anyway, then we had Jones. I had very little contact with Dr. Jones, and then we had Acting President Derrick and Acting President Cates at one time, and then Mr. Hardesty?

**Schumann:** But there’s not a great deal of contact then between faculty members and top administration.

**FitzPatrick:** No, because we are so big today. Now, when I came back here in ’61, I gave a party, I remember, the first year I was here, and I invited all the administrators, all the deans and all—Dr. Wilson was the vice president. Can you imagine that today?

**Schumann:** No. It would be impossible.

**FitzPatrick:** That’s right.

**Schumann:** You would not know them, and they would not know you.

**FitzPatrick:** Well, it’s socializing with people that you have very little contact with, that’s not very much fun. You very soon run out of platitudes.
**Schumann:** San Marcos is a fairly closed community as far as the social activities between people who are working on a campus and the city itself, or is it not so much so?

**FitzPatrick:** I don’t know. It seems to me, we have the Heritage Society, we have the garden clubs, and you have a mingling of both university and town people. Although, there definitely is a line, and I think I’m probably one of the few people in the world that have a foot in both camps. But, I see it. And I hear things from town people that they wouldn’t say, I think perhaps, if they thought I was totally university.

**Schumann:** Well, Professor FitzPatrick. This is pretty much the end of our two sessions. I want to say thank you to you for taking your time.

**FitzPatrick:** Well, I appreciate it. I hope it’s successful.

**Schumann:** I think it will be. I will get the transcripts to you and then if you have anything that you’d like to add after you’ve read through the manuscript, we can make those adjustments, additions at another time.

**FitzPatrick:** Okay.

**Schumann:** Thank you.

*End of interview*