

Interview with Anne Mackey

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Begin Tape 1, Side 1

This is the interview with Mrs. Anne Mackey by Priscilla Hanz at 536 S. Santa Clara, New Braunfels, on March 14, 1986

Priscilla Hanz: Mrs. Mackey is going to start with a brief statement to let us know a little bit about herself.

Anne Mackey: My name is Anne Parman Mackey. I'm a retired English teacher, having taught thirty-five years in the public schools of Texas. I got both my degrees, both my bachelor's and my master's, from Southwest Texas University, or Southwest State College at that time. So, Priscilla has asked me to tell you a little bit about the college at the time, about teaching back in the old days, and it is very different in many ways from teaching now.

I'll begin by telling you how I got to Texas and how I got to Southwest Texas. I was born in Oklahoma. My father had a grocery store, and this whole story is very much colored by the Depression, which was beginning to be in full swing at this time. It doesn't mean a great deal to younger people nowadays because it's hard to visualize what the Depression was and what its impact was on every aspect of people's lives. We left Oklahoma because my father's grocery store went broke, not because he was a bad business man, but because people simply couldn't pay their bills. We went to South Texas to the lower Rio Grande Valley where people were supposed to be able to get rich raising citrus fruit. But about that time economic crisis struck the Rio Grande Valley also, and we only stayed there about two and a half years. Then we moved to San Marcos largely because my mother insisted that we move to a college town. She was determined that all of her children were going to be college graduates.

Hanz: Mrs. Mackey, how old were you when you came to San Marcos and what was the family situation then?

Mackey: I was twelve years old, and I'm not quite sure what you mean by the family situation. I was the oldest of four children, so we were all still at home, of course. And my father was looking for work. He did finally get work in a grocery store there, but we lived pretty, pretty low on the totem pole for a good many years there because of the Depression, of course. And I'm sure one of the main reasons my mother felt it was essential that we live in a college town was that she knew that they would never be able to send us all to college if we had to pay room and

board too, you know, but if we lived in a college town, she thought it was quite possible. Well, of course, the two boys disappointed her. One of them got through his junior year. The other one didn't ever go to college. But both of us girls did get master's degrees. So, I guess it was worth moving to San Marcos, anyway.

Hanz: Oh, I think so.

Mackey: Now, the college at the time that I started, had about 1,500 students, which may seem amazing to students at the present.

Hanz: It does. I think there are twenty thousand now.

Mackey: I think so. I was—I think there was one girl that was a month or two younger than I was—except for her, I was the youngest student at the college. I was fifteen.

Hanz: Fifteen?

Mackey: Right.

Hanz: That's pretty young for college.

Mackey: Right. I finished college at nineteen. I would have finished earlier, but my mother wouldn't let me go to summer school. She said, "You are finishing young enough as it is, and there's no sense in it." So, I didn't go to summer school, and I had to be all of nineteen before I finished college.

Hanz: Were there any rules about ending that young?

Mackey: No, there weren't. You had your high school diploma from an accredited school. We didn't have to take college entrance tests.

Hanz: Where had you gone to school before where it was so rapidly advanced?

Mackey: Well, you see, I started when I was five. I skipped the second grade, so when I was six, I was in the third grade.

Hanz: Oh, well, that got you off to a head start.

Mackey: It really did. And also, at that time, Texas only had eleven grades.

Hanz: Oh, I see.

Mackey: A lot of people don't remember that. It was in the early forties that Texas switched to the twelve grade system. So, there was no problem about getting into college if you came from an accredited school.

Hanz: So what department or subject did you go into?

Mackey: Well, I majored in Spanish, actually. But I took a full major in English, also, by taking a lot of English electives. And I ended up teaching first a combination of English and Spanish and then, finally, got to teaching English, only because I went into a town where they didn't need Spanish teachers, but they did need an English teacher.

Anyway, that's sort of beside the point, what I want to tell you about the school at the time is—tuition at that time, I remember was \$30 a semester. The first year I was in college, the state still furnished the textbooks. Now, shortly after that, they stopped furnishing textbooks at the college level. I remember, I think that the professor was not pleased with what the state used or for some good reason, you know. Anyway, the state furnished most of the textbooks; I think it was more than one year, actually, so that I didn't buy an awful lot of textbooks when I was in college.

Hanz: That saved you a lot of money.

Mackey: It certainly did. I, also, people might be interested in knowing, at that time we had a three semester year instead of two quarters.

(Unintelligible)

Hanz: That was a whole different arrangement, then.

Mackey: Right.

Hanz: How many teachers were up there, do you know?

Mackey: I don't know. I don't know how many teachers there were. It was a small enough school, though, that students could actually get to know members of the faculty very well, especially the faculty in your major field. You really could get well acquainted with them and actually be protégés. And it was good. It was good in a great many ways.

Hanz: Do you feel the teachers were more dedicated to the students than in the modern day?

Mackey: On the whole, I think they took a more personal interest in the students, yes. Now, I'm not sure that I can say that, because, naturally, I don't know too many of the professors nowadays. All I know is what I hear from people who go to college nowadays.

Hanz: You took mostly English and Spanish; did you have to take other subjects?

Mackey: Well, yes, we had to take so much history, a certain amount of science, a certain amount of—there were basic requirements that everybody had to take.

Hanz: PE?

Mackey: Oh yes, we had to have, I think it was two years of PE, if I remember correctly. And, incidentally, people might be interested to know, that was the first PE I had ever had. We didn't

have PE in high school, when I was in high school. Now some schools may have had it, but we didn't. San Marcos didn't.

Hanz: What kinds of things did you have in PE class?

Mackey: Well, you could take—they offered tennis, field sports. I'm thinking what they had for girls, of course. Naturally, for the boys they had football and all the other things. Horseshoe pitching was a very interesting one.

Hanz: Horseshoe pitching?

Mackey: Yes, it was.

Hanz: Did anyone major in horseshoe pitching?

Mackey: Not that I know of, no. And, I don't know, you could take rhythmic activities which involved folk dancing, rhythm dancing, this sort of thing.

Interruption [telephone and cat]

Hanz: Kitty cat, don't sit on the microphone. To some of the teachers that you had, can you tell us about some of the teachers, if any were interesting?

Mackey: Oh, I can remember some characters. Almost anybody who went to school at the time will remember. First of all, before I forget it, I want to tell you something about the college rules for girls.

Hanz: Oh yes, that would be very interesting.

Mackey: I tell you, people nowadays will get a charge out of this, I think. You'd be amazed at how strict they were on the girls in those days. In the first place, the girls, if they didn't live with their parents, had to stay in dormitories. There was no living in apartments in town, absolutely not. And you had to be in by a certain hour. It was something like ten o'clock on week nights, and you could stay out until twelve maybe on Friday night or Saturday night. You had to get permission to date anybody besides a college boy, which always seemed a little strange to me, because I knew some college boys who were a lot wilder than a lot of town boys I knew. You had to get permission to ride in a car.

Hanz: To ride in it?

Mackey: To ride in a car with a boy.

Hanz: How about if it was your family car?

Mackey: Well, that's different. If it was with your parents.

Hanz: But if it was with a boy you had to get permission?

Mackey: Right, or even if it was a bunch of girls.

Hanz: Oh, if it was girls?

Mackey: Anything, anything, of course, most people didn't have cars in those days. Students didn't.

Hanz: That's true. They noticed if you were going against the rules.

Mackey: Right, students didn't have cars.

Hanz: That's different.

Mackey: Right. There were places in town that were off limits. Anyplace where there was drinking or anything of that sort, you know, although San Marcos was dry. But I mean there were places out on the edge of town on the county line that the students were absolutely forbidden to go. Absolutely, you could get kicked out of school if you were seen at one of them. That was the end.

Hanz: How about going home to the family?

Mackey: You got permission to go home because the college had to know that that's where you were and not somewhere else. Your parents were supposed to expect them to know, you see. And I suspect a lot of parents agreed with this back in those days. That wouldn't be so terribly strange.

Another thing, I remember knowing a woman, I got acquainted with her because I was doing some tutoring, and I was helping her. She was an older woman who had come back to school, and she needed brushing up on her English, and she hired me to tutor her. She had an apartment off-campus. She was a divorcee, and she was not allowed a place in the dormitories because she was divorced. She couldn't live and contaminate those girls. So, I think that will surprise a lot of people.

Then back to some of the teachers I remember. I know one teacher that, not a teacher exactly, that is still talked about, the dean of women, Mary Catherine Brogdon. Now Miss Brogdon was dean of women when I was an undergraduate, and I can remember real distinctly seeing her walk down that hall. I never will forget one time when she stopped and asked me, she said, "Now, let me see, you live here with your parents, don't know?" And I said, "Yes ma'am, I do." And she says, "Well, that's all right then." And then she prissed on down the hall. I have never known where she had seen me or whom she had seen me with, but if I hadn't been living with my parents, apparently I would have been in trouble. I don't know what it was. Anyway, they used to tell stories about Miss Brogdon, and I'm sure most of them were just myths. They said, for example, that she, when she had to call these girls together and gave them these lectures, which I

never went to, that she cautioned them that no lady would ever sit in a chair while it was still warm from the heat of a man's body.

Hanz: What was that for?

Mackey: Well, just because, that was one of her rules, they said, but I doubt that she went that far. But they told tales like this about her. Also, I remember one boy used to tell the tale that one night he called for her up on the telephone and said, "This is John." He figured that she had surely known somebody named John somewhere or other at some time. So he said "I'm just in town for a few days. Meet me for dinner tonight at such and such café." And he said she agreed to meet him. Now, boys could go anywhere they wanted to.

Hanz: Oh, boys, okay.

Mackey: Right. Stay out until all hours, go anywhere they wanted to, get in anybody's car they wanted to.

Hanz: So the rules were only for the girls?

Mackey: Right. Anyway, he claims that he went and saw Miss Brogdon come in and sit down and wait and wait and wait and wait. I don't know whether that is true or not.

Hanz: It sounds like quite a trick.

Mackey: Right. Anyway, she had this kind of story told about her.

Another character whom I admired very much was Dr. Murphy, Dr. Retta Murphy, who taught history, who had her hair cut short, smoked a pipe. She used to sit out on her front porch in the evenings and smoke that pipe. You'd go by, and she lived on the street that I had to go down going home. And there she would be, sitting on her porch, smoking that pipe. But she was one of the most brilliant teachers that I have ever had, one of the most delightful teachers I've ever had. She could keep you so fascinated in listening to her talk about history that the bell would ring when you wouldn't think you had been in there ten minutes. And she knew the material so well that she never had to look at a note, and yet it was so perfectly organized that you could take note in perfect outline form and never have to revise your notes. And she was full of the most interesting little tidbits about the historical characters. I had never known how interesting history could be until I had Dr. Murphy, and my sister felt the same way about her. We both enjoyed Dr. Murphy immensely, but, of course, she was another one who had all kinds of tales told about her because of that haircut and smoking that pipe, you know. And because there are a lot of students who don't appreciate really good teachers too, you know.

Another great character that some people may remember hearing about was Prof. Green. He also was in the history department. Now he was a little kind of wiry sort of a man with short grey hair who chewed tobacco, spit out the window sometimes and other times had a drawer full of

sawdust that he spit into. But he is supposed to have—I never did have him, my sister had him. She thought he was brilliant. He's supposed to have been sharp as a tack—he had a whole house full of children, I think eight or ten of them, and at the time that I was in school, his wife had finally gotten enough freedom that she was starting to get her degree, too. But, in the meantime, apparently, he couldn't stand all the children because he had a separate little house.

Hanz: His own house?

Mackey: His own house right next door to the house that his wife and children lived in. I guess he had to have his solitude. But at the same time that everybody laughed at Prof. Green, everybody admired him because he was so sharp and interesting. You know, teachers like that sometimes can be more stimulating than the old, dull, common-place teachers. I'm trying to think of any other—

Hanz: I remember you once told me you admired a teacher that you had for Spanish.

Mackey: Oh, yes. I wouldn't call him a character. He wasn't anybody to laugh at. Dr. J. Lloyd Reed. I loved that man. I thought he was a great man. And he was head of the Spanish department. Also, he was a marvelous singer. He'd sing to us sometimes in Spanish, you know, and he was great. I thought the world of that man. He's the one I think I told you about, you know, that used to live in that house where the Palmers have their restaurant now, and how I felt when they put that restaurant in there, that that was a sacrilege to be putting a restaurant in Dr. Reed's house. That's the way I felt about him and a lot of other people did too.

Hanz: I'm sure.

Mackey: He's been dead a long, long time now. I'll never forget him.

Hanz: It's a pretty house.

Mackey: Uh-huh, it is.

Hanz: Any other interesting people?

Mackey: Well, offhand I don't think of any that particularly impressed me. Why don't we get on to first job?

Hanz: That's a good idea. Now, you finished college in what year. Do you remember?

Mackey: 1930.

Hanz: 1930, now that was a hard time to find a job, wasn't it?

Mackey: It was a hard time to find a job, and I was extremely lucky to find one.

Hanz: How did you find one?

Mackey: Just went out and applied. The college had a placement department where they knew about schools that were hunting for teachers and they would tell you where they were hunting for teachers and you could go and apply. And one interesting thing was, in those days, you didn't just go and talk to the superintendent or principal, you had to go and talk to every member of the school board.

Hanz: My, that would take a while.

Mackey: They didn't just take the superintendent's recommendations on hiring a teacher. Each school board member decided for himself.

Hanz: So you had to talk to quite a few people, then, before you found a job?

Mackey: Right. I did.

Hanz: Where did you find a job?

Mackey: The first job I had was at Schertz, which is a consolidated now, but it wasn't then. It was just a little five-teacher school.

Hanz: Five teachers, and how many grades?

Mackey: Ten.

Hanz: Ten grades and five teachers. So that left you doing what?

Mackey: Well, actually, my homeroom, as you would call it nowadays, was sixth and seventh grade. I remember there were only eleven grades all together. Anyway, I had that room half a day and then the other half a day. I had the English in the high school room, you see. All the English in the high school room, eighth, ninth, and tenth.

Hanz: So how many students do you think there were?

Mackey: Roughly, there would have been, let me think—not over 130 or so in the whole school because we weren't heavily loaded or anything. It was just a matter of too many subjects and too many grades to cover.

Hanz: That made it difficult didn't it?

Mackey: Right.

Hanz: What was it like, trying to teach a mixed group like that?

Mackey: Well, it wasn't exactly the best situation in the world, but we didn't have all of the discipline problems that we have nowadays, which made a big difference. Kids came to school expecting to behave themselves, and they did.

Hanz: That's on the whole?

Mackey: Right, on the whole. Once in a while, you'd have a little trouble with somebody, but, usually, if his parents found out he was giving some trouble, that was it in those days.

Hanz: What kind of problems came up?

Mackey: Oh, maybe some kid who would create a disturbance in class, you know, by picking on some other kid instead of paying attention or something like this.

Hanz: Nothing too—

Mackey: Oh no. Huh-uh, good gracious, no. It wasn't bad at all.

Hanz: How about being with teachers, though, did you have unusual problems or anything that you can think of?

Mackey: Well, of course, we didn't have the facilities that we have now. For one thing, there were no duplicators.

Hanz: No duplicators?

Mackey: No duplicators of any kind. No.

Hanz: So what did you do?

Mackey: Well, we wrote on the blackboard. I can remember how many times I used to think, Oh, I wish there was some way that you could have this on something and then just project it up here. You know, not have to write it on the blackboard.

Hanz: So you were thinking of an overhead projector before they had them?

Mackey: Right. Or something along that line. And I remember the first kind of duplicator that I ever worked with wasn't that first year I was teaching, it was several years later. It was a gelatin duplicator. Now let me describe it to you. It was in a wooden box. I had a double one that folded like a book so that you had two pages to work with. And each one of those pages, each one of those leaves was a tray that was filled with a gelatin mixture. You poured that in there, you heated it and poured it in there, and you let it get firm. And then you had, you either had an ink you could use or a carbon you could use if you were using a typewriter. But I didn't have a typewriter, so I had to use the ink and write out my things I wanted to do—or print them by hand. And then you took this master, and you pressed it down on this gelatin surface, you smoothed it out and pressed it down. You let it stay on there one minute. Then you pulled it off, and you could make maybe fifty or sixty copies from that by taking each sheet of paper, pressing it down, smoothing it on, peeling it off. Then you wait seven or eight hours for that ink to soak in before you can put another copy on and start something else.

Hanz: Oh, I see, you could reuse it?

Mackey: Reuse it, yes. Until it got so full of ink you had to scrape it out and throw it in the trash and buy another can of gelatin, melt it and pour it in. But I had thought that was the most wonderful thing that I had ever seen.

Hanz: How long did it take you to make about fifty copies like this?

Mackey: Oh, I don't know.

Hanz: Was it fast, slow?

Mackey: It was pretty slow.

Hanz: You had to handle each piece—

Mackey: Right you had to handle each one and then, of course, they came up slightly moist, and they didn't want to lie flat. It was a mess, it really was. And we had no libraries, in small schools like that, anyway. Larger schools had them, of course. But little old schools like that had no libraries.

Hanz: What were the sources of books?

Mackey: Oh, we might have a few books in each room, but most of them—there wasn't any library in the town, there wasn't any library in the school. The poor kids just didn't have any supplementary books.

Hanz: So they had their textbooks, and that was about it?

Mackey: Uh-huh. And not too many of them, of course, had books at home. Another thing, what was expected of teachers, teachers might be required to stay in town over the weekend. If the teacher had the notion she was coming into a town to teach during the week and go home on the weekend, she would probably find out that community was not going to put up with that. They expected her to stay there and spend her money there that weekend and go to church there on Sunday and take part in the church there and not in some church in some other town.

Hanz: So you were part of the whole community, instead of just a worker.

Mackey: Right.

Hanz: That could kind of hold back your relationship with your family couldn't it? I suppose it did.

Mackey: Oh, they'd let you go home once in a while, of course, but not every weekend as some people would have liked to do.

Hanz: How about if you were married?

Mackey: They wouldn't hire married women, most schools wouldn't.

Hanz: Wouldn't hire a married woman?

Mackey: No, they wouldn't hire a married woman. If a teacher got married, some schools might let her stay on and finish out the year. Others might make her stop right then.

Hanz: What was the reasoning behind that?

Mackey: The main one that they presented was that a woman was taking a job away from a man who needed it if she was teaching.

Hanz: So it was economic.

Mackey: Right. It was mostly economic, yes. It was not that they objected to women teaching because most of the teachers were women, but somehow or another they wanted them to remain single if they were going to teach.

Hanz: That's interesting. This first school, how long did you stay there?

Mackey: I just stayed there one year because I got married.

Hanz: Oh, you got married. That was the end of that, right? Then what did you do?

Mackey: Well, I stayed out of teaching for two or three years because I was married, but my husband wasn't able to get much work, and so I kept on trying to get a job. Finally, here's kind of an interesting story that some people might enjoy hearing. Finally, along about midterm one year, a little school up above Uvalde had a teacher to resign suddenly because they had refused to give her the superintendency for the next year. The school board had met that night and had hired somebody else for superintendent for the next year, and she had applied for it, and she'd got angry and told them she was handing in her resignation. They accepted it, called the college in San Marcos, and asked them to send a replacement. The woman who was head of the placement bureau in San Marcos had been one of my teachers, and she called me and asked me if I wanted to go. And I said, "Yes ma'am." So I went.

Well, I went not knowing that that same night the teacher came back and said "I'm sorry, I changed my mind, I'll stay." And they said, Well, that's too bad, we've already got somebody to take your place. And she said, "Well, I'll run her out of town."

Hanz: Oh, no. That could have got to be a pretty hairy situation.

Mackey: Well, she tried to do it. She tried to get my students to go on strike.

Hanz: Really?

Mackey: She did.

Hanz: What year was this?

Mackey: This was '38, I believe. I believe it was. I'm not sure about that year.

Hanz: That was pretty—pretty militant for then.

Mackey: Yes, it was. She tried to get them to go on strike.

Hanz: What happened?

Mackey: Well, they wouldn't. But she still had her key to the school, refused to turn it in, so she would come to the school on weekends, get a bunch of my students and come to school on the weekends, go and get out balls, volleyballs and take them out on picnics and play volleyball with them and talk to them and try to tell them they didn't have to do this and that and the other thing that I would tell them to do.

Hanz: That interfered a great deal, didn't it?

Mackey: It certainly did. And, finally, they had to put some new locks on the school building because she refused to turn in that key. But her husband was one of the big merchants in the little town, so there wasn't too much they could do to quiet her down.

Hanz: And then what happened there at the end?

Mackey: I don't know; she finally left me alone.

Hanz: She finally did?

Mackey: Uh-huh.

Hanz: How long did you end up staying there?

Mackey: I stayed there two years, and then I went down the road a little old bit to a bigger school. Not a better school.

Hanz: Bigger, how much bigger?

Mackey: Well, Barksdale was four teachers and the one I went to was, let me think a minute, seven or eight.

Hanz: Gosh, yes that was almost double.

Mackey: But they were getting ready to build a high school—

Hanz: What city was that?

Mackey: Camp Wood. Something I forget to tell you about my first teaching job, let me bring this in. This is something else that teachers may not realize. I don't think I mentioned the salary.

Hanz: No.

Mackey: \$75 a month.

Hanz: \$75 a month?

Mackey: For nine months, no summer classes.

Hanz: For nine months? Insurance?

Mackey: Oh, no, nothing like that. Nothing, absolutely. We'd never heard of such things as that. But, on top of that, the school district didn't have the money to pay us so they paid us in what they called vouchers. And we took them to the bank, and the bank cashed them at a discount because what they were actually doing was lending the school district money to pay us. So we discounted that; we actually got \$70 a month.

Hanz: \$70, then out of \$75, so the bank used that \$5 as their charge, kind of, to the school. How strange. And then did the wages go up?

Mackey: Not—

Hanz: Or did they stay that way for quite a while?

Mackey: They stayed that way for quite a while. I'm trying to think just when—they went up so gradually. By the time I was teaching in Burnett, about thirty-five years ago, they were only about \$125 a month.

Hanz: That's very low, isn't it?

Mackey: It certainly is, uh-huh. And I stopped teaching then because I was expecting a baby. And right after that, they did go up, considerably for then, but it wouldn't have looked like much now. I think it went up to two hundred and something a month. And I'm talking about nine months' pay.

Hanz: Right, no summer pay. In the summer you were on your own.

Mackey: Of course, nowadays, teachers are not getting summer pay, you realize.

Hanz: Right. They just—

Mackey: They just take their pay and they divide it into twelve payments instead of nine.

Hanz: Did the men teachers get the same pay?

Mackey: In some schools, men got more. I remember hearing an interesting little story about something that happened here in New Braunfels back in those days. A teacher, who had taught there for years and years, I'd rather not mention her name, told me that she went to the superintendent one time and asked why men teachers were getting more pay than she was, and he told her, "Well, it's because they have families to support." And she said at the time her husband was still around, so she was still disgruntled, but she didn't say much. It wasn't very long after that her husband left her and she had two little boys to support, so she said she marched into the superintendent's office and informed him that she now had a family to support. And she felt that she was entitled to as much pay as a man. He told her he was sorry, but there was nothing he could do about it, he couldn't pay a woman that much. In other words, that wasn't really the reason.

Hanz: That wasn't the real reason?

Mackey: Uh-huh.

Hanz: How many schools did you teach in all, roughly?

Mackey: Let me think a minute.

Hanz: Let's say up to when you stopped there to have your children.

Mackey: Well, that was the third school I'd ever taught in. And then, of course, after that I came here.

Hanz: The whole family came here about when?

Mackey: '54.

Hanz: '54—now that's to New Braunfels?

Mackey: To New Braunfels, yeah.

Hanz: Now, was that to this house?

Mackey: This house, right—I've been living in the same house ever since I came to New Braunfels.

Hanz: And when you came to New Braunfels, did you come because you had work or for some other reason?

Mackey: I came—I had not been teaching for six years, from the time Marilyn was born until she started school. And I had made up my mind, when I went back to teaching that I was not going to take just any job. I was going to get me a job where there was a school that I wanted my children to go to—the kind of school I wanted them to be in—not a small school where they wouldn't have any electives or any choice of subjects. And, also, I was tired of moving around.

My husband was a carpenter, and his work made him move around a lot, and I'd made up my mind that I was through moving. That I was going to get a place that I wanted to stay in, that I wanted the children to finish school in, so I turned down several offers before I came here. And I decided that this was the kind of place that I wanted to live in—the kind of school that I wanted my children to graduate from. So that's why I came here.

Hanz: 1954 brought you to New Braunfels, and did you start teaching then right away?

Mackey: Oh, yes. I came here because I had the job.

Hanz: Because you had the job offered?

Mackey: Right.

Hanz: And where was that? At the high school?

Mackey: At the high school when it was over here on Guenther Street.

Hanz: On Guenther Street, right, which is now the middle school?

Mackey: Right.

Hanz: But yet that was a fairly large size school for then.

Mackey: There were twenty-seven teachers in the high school at the time that I came here. Of course, there's seventy-something now, so that has grown considerably.

Hanz: And what did you teach, primarily?

Mackey: I came here to teach English. Now, since I've been here, there were a couple of years that I did teach one class of Spanish when there were just too many classes for the Spanish teacher to handle. But, mostly, I have just taught English since I've been here.

Hanz: You also taught up at what we call the new high school, up on the hill—

Mackey: Yes.

Hanz: When that was built. That's a very nice facility up there. What changes occurred when you moved like that, up to the new high school? What were some of the major things you liked about that compared to the building where the middle school is now?

Mackey: Well, of course, it was the controlled environment that was the main thing that we appreciated down there. Absolutely, air conditioning and all that. We had, down at the old building we hadn't had air conditioning, and I can remember so well those sweltering afternoons in the fall and the spring, and the gnats getting in at the window from bushes outside, and the

trucks roaring by with the windows open that nearly drowned out the class from time to time. So, the quiet and the controlled atmosphere up there were really great.

Hanz: Good for air conditioning, right?

Mackey: Yes.

Hanz: All the schools you taught up to then were without air conditioning.

Mackey: Right. That was the first time I'd taught in air conditioning. It was the first time for a lot of people.

Hanz: I imagine, too, now that I think about it, you know, that that was quite a big thing when it came here.

Mackey: Oh, yes.

Hanz: Do you think that the heat hindered classes in the past years?

Mackey: Oh, yes, I think kids got drowsy and couldn't pay attention, and you couldn't accomplish much in the hottest months.

Hanz: So overall, you've seen at least one improvement?

Mackey: Oh, yes. Also, I felt it was a great improvement not to have all those noises from outside coming in.

Hanz: Noise wasn't so big a problem at the first schools, though was it?

Mackey: No, no it wasn't.

Hanz: But this one [on Guenther] was by a highway—

Mackey: Right.

Hanz: And, of course, transportation changed, too—can you think of any other things that have changed drastically over the years?

Mackey: Well, of course, salaries have improved a great deal, but the biggest improvement has come since I retired, unfortunately. Right now, understand I'm thankful, very glad that they are getting it, but I think that teachers who are going into teaching now should appreciate the fact that, right now, a beginning teacher makes more than I was making when I retired with thirty-five years' experience and a master's degree. So I hope they appreciate it.

Hanz: It's changed quite a bit, then?

Mackey: Yes, it has. And, of course, library facilities have improved immensely. The audio-visual aids are a great blessing. I think sometimes some teachers overuse them, but it's a marvelous thing to be able to have them. And, of course, the duplicating facilities, I don't know how we ever got along without them. Think how much more time it takes when you would have to put all that stuff upon the board and have the students copy it. Whereas, now, you can hand it to them and have them get to work on it.

Hanz: That's really very time-saving.

Mackey: Very time-saving. And not only that, but they've got it there, they can stick it in their notebooks, they've got it to keep, and they've got—

Hanz: And you know it's spelled right.

Mackey: Right, right.

Hanz: Do you think that the subjects were more useful back in the days when you were first teaching school? Do you think they have changed on the subject matter a lot?

Mackey: No, I don't. One thing that has improved about subject matter, I'm so glad that we have gotten to the point now where we don't have teachers teaching things that they're not qualified in. We have finally gotten to the point that you can't stick a teacher in a classroom to teach a subject that he doesn't have enough training in. So just to show you why that was necessary, back to my first year of teaching, that sixth and seventh grade class they had seventh grade agriculture class. I had to teach that agriculture class.

Hanz: You taught agriculture?

Mackey: Now, of course, it was just a book agriculture class, and all I could do was use that textbook, and we could talk about different kinds of soil and different kinds of chickens and different kinds of cattle and all this kind of thing. And I guess they learned something, but that was utterly ridiculous for me to be teaching agriculture when I had never had a course.

Hanz: Were there other examples like that, of teachers doing that too, quite often?

Mackey: Oh yes, it was done very frequently.

Hanz: Do you remember any other you got asked to teach?

Mackey: No, I was pretty lucky on that, because I nearly always had my schedule full enough that they couldn't stick me anywhere.

Hanz: (Unintelligible)

Mackey: Right. I have seen a lot of it done. Seen people put—of course, there's this matter of coaches being stuck in all kinds of classes that they are not really qualified for.

Hanz: I can imagine some strange combinations.

Mackey: Well, probably I shouldn't have said that.

Hanz: It's all right.

Mackey: I have seen some good, some coaches who were good teachers, though—some. But most of them have no business in classrooms. You can take that out if you want to.

Hanz: No—one more question just to kind of sum it up, could you tell me if you feel, overall, that schools are better or worse now than they were when you first started teaching?

Mackey: Oh, I think in many, many ways they are better. Of course, teachers are better trained, regardless of what they public is saying about them nowadays. I admit we may have some poor teachers, but on the whole, teachers are more knowledgeable than they used to be, they have more education, more training, they have more facilities, they have more equipment, the students have more opportunities for more electives than they ever had before, but at the same time, it seems that in gaining all this, somehow or other, somewhere along the line, we have lost the respect of the public and the respect of the students. We don't have the discipline that we used to have. I think there are several reasons for that and at the high school level in particular. Now there may be many people who would disagree with me.

One of those reasons, I think is this. When they raised the age for compulsory education, requiring students to go to high school until age seventeen instead of fifteen, we began to have to try to teach the kind of student who before this would have dropped out, who's not the least bit interested in being educated, and his family usually isn't interested in having him educated. He is there because he has to be and not because he wants to be, and he usually is keeping somebody else from learning and not learning much himself either. I think that's one of the reasons.

Of course, another reason is, for some strange reason, parents no longer support the school the way they used to. I can remember, for example, that when I first started teaching, I think any parent would have cooperated if I would have told them that his son or daughter was not doing his work or was not paying attention in class or was creating a disturbance in class. I don't think I ever had a parent who would not have been interested in trying to make that child shape up. Nowadays, you're lucky if you get a parent who will do anything except tell you that you just don't know how to handle the child or, if you're supposed to be teaching him, it's not their place, or something, some excuse. They're not interested in bothering about it for the most part.

Hanz: So it's more a change in attitude?

Mackey: Right, a change of attitude. That's it exactly. I can remember that when I was in school, of course, if I had ever gotten myself in any kind of trouble in school, I would have been in worse trouble when I got home. That's not true anymore.

Hanz: You enjoyed teaching, though, overall, didn't you?

Mackey: Oh, yes. I loved it.

Hanz: And you still substitute at times?

Mackey: Yes, I do.

Hanz: You keep your finger in.

Mackey: Yes.

Hanz: Well, I've enjoyed the interview. I hope you have too. I think it's very beneficial and a lot of people will enjoy hearing this.

Mackey: Well, I hope somebody will get some pleasure and some good out of it.

Hanz: I think they will. Thank you.

End Side 1, begin Side 2

Mehitabel: Prrr. Prrrr.

Hanz: That was the cat purring. Mrs. Mackey wants to say something about the students at her first school that she thought was interesting, in addition.

Mackey: Not the first school, the second one, up in the hills above Uvalde. The one where I went and the woman tried to run me off and so on. The amazing thing was how isolated those youngsters were from the rest of the world, how little they knew about what was going on in the world. Many of them had never even been out of the county. They, most of them, had been to Uvalde at one time or another, but that's about as far as most of them had ever been. And I recall that the first day I was in the classroom with them, I started trying to get acquainted with them by just having a conversation, trying to draw them out, get them to talk a little bit. This was at the time when Edward VIII had just abdicated the throne to marry Wallis Simpson and Mussolini was on the rampage, and all these things were going on, so I tried to get them talking about some of these things. Well, I discovered that there was only one boy in the class who knew who those people were when I asked about them. The other had never heard of them. They didn't read newspapers, some of them had radios, but they never listened to news. If their parents did, they weren't paying any attention.

I recall also, that one time when I hadn't been there very long, the town down the road a little ways had a movie theatre. We didn't have one. And they were having the movie about the exploration of the South Pole. So I made arrangements to take my room, which was only about ten or twelve people, to see that movie. And we went down there, and I recall the movie ended with Bert Lahr talking for the penguins as they pranced across the ice. Well, I assumed that

everybody knew, you know, that this was just a voice-over. But we got in the car and we started back home, one little girl said, “I didn’t know that those birds could talk.” She had never seen a movie before and didn’t know that this was just a put-on. I ran into more things in that community that showed absolute ignorance of what was going on in the world. I don’t think it’s like that there anymore because the mother of that boy who did know the answers, later on managed to get—make some arrangements with the state to get a little library there. By somehow or other, I don’t remember what the situation was, but the state was offering the loan of books for a certain length of time if somebody would be responsible for them, and she did manage to get a little bit of a library there. So that boy had parents different from most of the people in that community. But this was the kind of experiences that you could run into back in those days. I don’t suppose that a teacher could run into a situation like that nowadays anywhere in Texas.

Hanz: I can’t imagine it. It’s even hard to believe then, isn’t it? What were they thinking about? What things were on their minds?

Mackey: I don’t know. I never did find out. Another interesting thing I remember from there, one member of the school board couldn’t read. The teacher who had the first, second and third grade told me, she had been there a long time, and she said that the first year she was there, this school board member came to see her and he informed her he did not hold with silent reading. And she said, “I had a feeling, immediately, that he didn’t know what it was. So I asked him, I said, ‘Well, Mr. Stillwell, what do you think when you come to a word you don’t know, you just skip it and don’t say it.’” Now, this was a member of the school board in that community. I don’t believe we’d have that anymore, either. So we’ve come a long way.

End of interview