

This interview with Edward Hibbs took place at his residence August 18, 1978. The interviewer was John Brennan.

JB: Mr Hibbs you were saying that you are a former teacher at Elston Senior and Elston Junior high schools.

EH: Yes.

JB: When did you begin there?

EH: I began in the fall of 1934, in the junior high school.

JB: How old were you then?

EH: Twenty five, getting close to twenty six.

JB: Were you born in Michigan City?

EH: I was born in LaPorte County, but I lived in Michigan City from the time I was seven, or seven and a half years old.

JB: What part of the county were you born in?

EH: Otis. About ten miles south of here.

JB: What year was that?

EH: 1908.

JB: Do you remember anything of your childhood in Otis.

EH: Well, we just lived there until I was seven years old, at which time my father was killed. He worked on the railroad there and was killed in an accident. My mother moved us to Michigan City where she could earn a living better.

JB: Did your family originally come from LaPorte county?

EH: My mother came from Germany to Michigan City. My father came from Jasper county, which is down 421, maybe thirty, forty miles.

JB: Do you remember much of your childhood in early Michigan City.

EH: Well, it was just like most people from laboring class people. We lived on the West side of Michigan City, and most everybody around us was not very affluent. We had to live economically.

JB: What kind of neighborhood was it? Were they Germans? Poles?

EH: Pretty much mixed. When we lived on West eighth St. in 1916, there was a new influx of people from Syria and Lebanon who had come to work in the car factory. At that time it was Haskel-Barker, and later became Pullman. The rest of the West side was a lot of Polish and a lot of Germans...Some people from Irish backgrounds.

JB: Did the various nationalities get along?

EH: I didn't notice much difference between most groups, but the Syrian and Lebanese group just didn't associate very much with the people on the other side of the street. I think it was mostly because of the language barrier.

JB: They gradually picked up the language?

EH: Oh yes.

JB: What grade school did you attend?

EH: I went to Park school in the third grade, then I went to Garfield in the fourth and fifth, then I went back to Park in the sixth grade. Then I went to Central school, which was the junior high school, seventh and eighth grade at that time.

JB: Where was that located?

EH: Where the present Central school building is, but in an older building that has been torn down. I graduated from the eighth grade there and then went up to the present junior high school building, which at that time was the senior high school through twelve grades.

JB: Were both buildings built?

EH: The present senior high school building was opened in the fall of 1925. I was in my senior year when we moved into that building. I graduated in 1926.

JB: What did the high school kids do during that time in Michigan City?

EH: There were high school dances on weekends. There were basketball games, and football games.

JB: Did you go down to the lake much?

EH: Oh yes, just about the same as today. There used to be a big dance hall down there called the Oasis, which a lot of high school kids went to as well as people who were out of high school.

JB: Do you remember seeing any of the big bands there?

EH: I didn't go to it, but the big bands were there. I can remember names like Jan Garber's band. Oh presently I can't think of any others right now.

JB: Did you go on to college after you graduated?

EH: I worked at Citizens' bank for four years after I graduated from high school. I started college in the fall of 1930.

JB: Where was that?

EH: I went to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. I graduated from there in 1934.

JB: Did you go there for the expressed purpose of becoming a teacher?

EH: Yes.

JB: And returning to Michigan City?

EH: Well, I hadn't any particular plan about where I would teach. But that's where I was able to get a job in the depression years. 1934.

JB: So you came back to Michigan City during the depression?

EH: Yes.

JB: Were the hardships very apparent here then?

EH: Oh yes. Salaries were low. Wages were low ...so were prices low, of course. A lot of people didn't have jobs. It was at the time when people without jobs worked for the organization called the W.P.A., which was essentially a relief organization to give money to people who weren't otherwise employed. The wages were low, but it was something.

JB: Could you relate your impressions of your first year of teaching?

ER: In the junior high school it was crowded, and every class had forty-two students in it because the rooms were fairly large and had forty-two seats and desks. If they'd been larger they'd have put more seats in, but that's all the rooms would hold.

JB: Did you teach English at that time?

EH: Well, in sort of the English and Social Studies departments: sometimes in one, sometimes in the other. The teachers were all friendly with one another. It was a smaller group than at present. The children were of all economic levels, from the very poorest to the wealthier families...all went to the same junior high school. My recollection of the children at that time, was how many of them, by today's standards, were very poorly dressed. You noticed especially very bad shoes, and children wearing clothes that someone else had cast off. I can remember particularly the

negroe children were especially poor. We had milk available in the middle of the morning because a lot of kids didn't have breakfast, or adequate breakfasts at home. That's the general kind of thing. A lot of very poor people.

JB: Were they eager to learn during the depression years?

EH: I don't think any more than or any less so than children at present. They would do what they were required to do if the teacher could get it out of them. Most of them, not any more, but I don't think the general attitude towards school was a great deal different than at present--except that maybe they accepted the authority of the teachers a little better than children today do. I mean if the teacher said to do something, for the most part, they thought they had to do it. But there were always some rebels who wouldn't.

JB: Did the depression affect the school life in any other way besides the dress patterns?

EH: Well, I can think of one boy who wasn't ....he always looked clean and well dressed, as if he had come from a home that probably wanted him to behave, but sometimes he was a little bit disobedient. And one time, some years later, I was coming home from Chicago on the South Shore, and he, who was at that time a grown man, probably in his twenties, came and sat with me on the train. He really apologized for his behavior when he had been in junior high. He began telling how poor they were, and a lot of times he didn't have breakfast, and that he had one shirt, or maybe two, and his mother would wash it every day so he could come to school looking decent. That kind of thing...and that was just one who spoke of it. Nobody knows how many more were like that.

JB: What was life in general like in Michigan City in the depression years?

EH: They had ....the depression had really begun before 1934, and I was in college during those first years, but I came home to Michigan City in 1934. There were a great many unemployed people and there were government plans for getting jobs to people who needed them, and there were relief organizations. There was some grumbling among some people who didn't think the W.P.A. workers worked hard enough. They laughed about their leaning on their shovels, instead of working but the fact is, they were hiring more people than they needed in order to give people jobs and get them food. The schools were scarce on materials: books and paper, and things like that, because the tax rate had had to be reduced and there just wasn't money enough for adequate supplies. We thought it was a great thing when the Junior high school was able to buy a silent movie projector. I don't know if that came out of school board funds or whether they had a campaign to raise money. During the years then that situation gradually improved, and they bought more equipment of one sort and another to use in instruction.

JB: When was it that the town began to pull itself together economically?

EH: I suppose in the late nineteen-thirties, and of course you noticed it most after WW2 began, when people began to work in war industries and there was less unemployment, and later on actually a shortage of labor. That's really what pulled us out of the depression as far as I'm able to determine.

JB: Did the years right before the war stand out in your mind in any way?

EH: Well, people who read about the news, what was going on in Europe, about the rise of Hitler, and things like that. There was some worry about what was coming. But nobody of course felt really certain about it. In nineteen thirty-nine, after school was out, I took a trip to Europe. A lot of people thought it was foolhardy to go into Germany at that time, that I'd never get out, but I did, and I got back to New York on the day the Germans bombed Warsaw. The feeling at home then was ....well, of course they knew then that the war was coming, and although we weren't in it at first, and people thought we should stay out of it, deeply, we knew that we would get into it. And of course we did. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and the war beginning in Europe.

JB: When the war did begin, did that effect school life in any way?

EH: Oh yes, we had paper drives to save paper. We had campaigns to sell stamps and war bonds, and we collected scrap metal and so forth to be used in the war effort. Everybody was urged to buy bonds to finance the war, with the idea that after the period was over, we'd have money to buy things that were in short supply during the war. That's about all I can think of on that score right at the moment.

JB: Would you say that there was ....that the atmosphere of the town was noticeably different from say the depression years? And how was it different?

EH: Oh yes, I suppose there was more liveliness. There was a fear of course, of who was going to be killed in the war, and how it was going to come out. The first years of the war looked pretty gloomy for the Western Allies. There was one victory after another by the Germans, and by the Japanese. So there was that fear, but at the same time nobody could quite face the fact that the United States would lose the war. Nobody believed that we would. Whereas during the depression people were despondant and had kind of a hopeless attitude.

JB: Was there any kind of social unrest during the depression years of any kind?

EH: Not that I can remember specifically. Actually some of this I remember from reading books about it after the war was over. Let me see, I believe this was before the war started when the veterans of WWI had the march on Washington to get their bonus. That was probably part of the depression time and not after WWII began.

JB: Sort of reminds one of the Vietnam vets and their plight.

EH: Yes. Uhhuh.

JB: Do you remember any particular crisis that occurred within the school system?

EH: No. I don't think there was anything particular. You mean like the student uprisings that came in the sixties?

JB: No ...say within the school system itself.

EH: Well, there were efforts to get salaries increased all along. There was a, what we called at that time, a Teachers' Federation that has since become the Indiana State Teachers' Association, I believe. It was not the one that is presently affiliated with the A.F.L.; they were organized. They didn't have the clout, I guess you might say, that present teachers' unions do, but we would go to the superintendant and to the school board, and sort of plead for better wages. There were some small efforts made to increase salaries, but they didn't really bear a great deal of fruit until after the war, because during the war, salaries were held down because of the money going into the war effort. There was never any threat of a teachers' strike, or anything like that. It was teachers among themselves would grumble and complain about the low salaries and that kind of thing, but I don't think there was ever any kind of effort toward even talk about having any kind of strike or any threat of that sort until much later ...almost until the nineteen seventies before that sort of thing came.

JB: The school board and the superintendent's word was considered final then?

EH: Pretty much so, yes. We'd argue about whether it was the right decision or not. But if it was decided by the school board and the superintendant, then that was pretty much it.

JB: Has that changed at all with the years?

EH: I think so yes. The teachers now, at least a vocal minority of them perhaps are very outspoken in what they think their rights are, compared with the way it used to be.

JB: Are they better protected these days?

EH: Yes. Sometimes I even wonder if it's gone too far, but it certainly is better than it was back in the nineteen thirties. Yes. I can remember one little incident we had here. We thought we had to contribute what we now call the United Way fund, and the superintendent told each one of us what we had to give, a minimum of what we had to give to the fund. We were to give one and one quarter days salary. Now I don't know what year this was, but I can remember two teachers who instead of doing that gave well, maybe fifty cents less than the day and a quarters salary. The superintendant called them in and they paid. Which is something that would be unheard of today, but that's the way it was handled then. It was either that or lose your job. I can remember one little incident we had here. We thought we had to contribute what we now call the United Way fund, and the superintendent told each one of us what we had to give, a minimum of what we had to give to the fund. We were to give one and one quarter days salary. Now I don't know what year this was, but I can remember two teachers who instead of doing that gave well, maybe fifty cents less than the day and a quarters salary. The superintendant called them in and they paid. Which is something that would be unheard of today, but that's the way it was handled then. It was either that or lose your job.

JB: Was there anywhere to appeal then?

EH: Well, you probably wouldn't have lost your job, but it would have caused a great deal of unpleasantness. There was teacher tenure, so that after you had taught five years, you couldn't be

fired for an offense of that sort. The pressures were there, just in a different way. You probably wouldn't have been fired, but it would have become unpleasant in another way.

JB: Was there any racial unrest in the schools?

EH: I think most of the racial unrest was just sort of suppressed. The black people accepted it without liking it, just like white people were accepting their unpleasant conditions of the time without any open rebellion about it. At least that's the way I remember it in Michigan City.

JB: As the war drew to a close, what was Michigan City like then?

EH: There was better wages. Everybody who wanted a job, had one. A lot of people were working two jobs. I can remember some teachers even would hold a job evenings over at the Kingsbury ordnance plant. Not many did that, but a couple did. And a lot of people held afternoon or weekend jobs in addition to teaching, simply because...well, there was a shortage of labor, and there was a chance to supplement your salary. I personally was asked to supervise the boys game room at the YMCA because all the, or most all the professional employees were away at war. I'd go down to the Y and supervise the boys' game room. I think it was four nights a week, at fifty cents an hour. More as a favor to the man who was running than the amount of money I was getting for it.

JB: Did any of the teachers enlist?

EH: Oh yes. Some enlisted, and sons were drafted. just like in any other industry. Some of the woman enlisted in the Womens' branches of the services at that time, and took leave of absence and were away for a couple of years, and came back after the war was over.

JB: Were the students interested in the war?

EH: Oh sure. They had older brothers, parents, and neighbors that were in it, and were interested in how they were coming out of it. One of the things I can think about, during part of that time I was teaching geography and places in the Southwest Pacific, for instance, the Solomon Islands. Most of us had never heard of them, and then all of a sudden here were people from our community, and from our own families who were there. They became interested in other parts of the world, that way. I think that has been pretty much, at least a large part of it has stayed with our general population--more knowledge about the whole world. Now of course we have television and so forth now, that makes people aware of things that they weren't aware of before.

JB: Did the war affect the curriculum in any way?

EH: I think I remember in social studies we put a greater emphasis on Latin American studies in the junior high school than before, and people were urged to study Spanish because they were ....the Spanish speaking people were our closest neighbors and so forth. And of course German faded out during those years, not because the school decided they wouldn't give it, but because students stopped signing up for it, and were taking what they considered more practical subjects. Many of them at that time were either not going to college, or were postponing college because

they were going into war. So they were not taking so much of what we call the Liberal Arts subjects. And of course there would be less affect of that sort on a junior high than on a senior high, although teachers trying to make their subjects come to life would always make references in Arithmetic as well as Social studies classes in order to bring the subject down to the level of the students, in what they were interested in.

JB: Was the PTA active back in the thirties?

EH: Yes it was, in the junior high particularly they had trouble getting enough parents of the senior high interested. I think there were sporadic efforts to have one. There were years when the junior high PTA was quite active, with a large number of mothers who held PTA meetings in trying to understand and help the school problems.

JB: Did you attend those meetings?

EH: Oh yes, we all felt that it was almost compulsory thing to attend. If there was some real reason why you couldn't, why, you didn't, but we were urged at least to attend all of them, and to serve on committees when asked to, and most of us felt we were willing to, even if we weren't very excited about it.

JB: Gould you perhaps describe a typical meeting?

EH: There were all sorts of different subjects that would have to do with school affairs, maybe getting supplies for the school that the school board wasn't able to provide. Or else discussions of a, oh, the way the teachers handled a discipline problem, or teaching problems. Sometimes we felt that the PTA was a marvelous social outlet for some of the women who were active in It. Sometimes the programs were just something to find to fill a meeting with, rather than really serve a purpose.

JB: Have the clothing styles changed much over the years?

EH: Of course one of the main things there is the people had more clothing, more variety in clothing. There was ....we went through a period when we thought it was wrong for girls to wear slacks to school. But that didn't come ....I don't think there was much concern about that until the late nineteen fifties, just what was normal acceptable dress anywhere, was acceptable in school. During the early part of my teaching, when the depression was the worst, kids just, a great many of them wore shabby clothes because that was all they had. Of course there were others whose families had enough money and who wore nice clothes, what was the style of the time.

JB: Would you say the students were more mature then in the thirties? Were they more aware of what was happening in the world?

EH: I think probably less mature, and less aware of what was going on in the world. As to the maturity, I don't think there's much difference in that--in the way they face their problems and so forth, Kids are still pretty much kids. Just as they were then. Beginning and inexperienced

teachers had trouble with classroom discipline and so forth, and experienced teachers had less of it. This is still the case today.

JB: How did they handle disciplinary problems?

EH: We had keeping kids in after school which we called detentions. I think there wasn't any legal restriction about spanking kids, but teachers have never, in my career used that very often. It was very rarely used and it upset the teacher more than the kids when it did happen. It was just a matter of keeping kids busy and insisting that the teacher had to be the boss and that sort of thing.

JB: It hasn't changed very much over the years then?

EH: Well, there's more rebellious on the part of kids now than then, and of course we have legal sanctions on physical punishment which at that time we didn't have.

JB: Who was the principal back in the thirties?

EH: When I started teaching in junior high it was Cecil Humphrey. M.L. Knapp was the principal of the senior high school, and M.C. Murray was the superintendant of schools. Then in nineteen thirty-nine Mr. Murray resigned and Mr. Knapp moved up to superintendant. Mr. Humphrey became principal of senior high, and A.K. Smith became principal of the junior high school. For me that was a good experience because I like Mr. Smith and respected his judgement on how the school should be run.

JB: How did he differ from Knapp?

EH: He followed Mr Knapp. How did he differ from Mr. Humphrey?

JB: Yes.

EH: Better communication with the teachers.

JB: Do you recall any of your childhood in Otis?

EH: I went to a one room school in Otis. All eight grades were in one room and I don't think that all eight grades together had more than twenty or twenty five students. There were three of us in the first grade, and one flunked, so there were two of us in the second grade the next year. Many of the people over the country at that time went to one room schools. Some of them may have had two rooms. I moved to Michigan City and entered Park school in the third grade.

JB: When you were in Otis do you remember what games you played? and what the area was like at that time?

EH: Not a great deal different than today as far as the area. Otis hasn't grown very much. Oh, we just play games in the school yard, ballgames and tag and that kind of thing. You see I was only

in first and second grade and didn't get in to that, but the bigger boys played games of that sort. The little ones just sort of played tag around the school yard during the recess time. We all brought our lunch to school, so that would be a time when you'd play around in the school yard.

JB: Do you remember who the teacher was at that time?

EH: Yes. The school teacher was Cathryn Hannon. She died just a few years ago. She lived in LaPorte eventually. It wasn't too long after we moved away to Michigan City that they closed that school. They took the kids who lived there in Otis to the school in Westville, I believe. And then there was a Catholic school in the town which a great many of the kids from the town went to because it was a Polish town and most of the people were Catholic, and so they sent the kids there. But the few who weren't probably went to Westville to school. We had moved to Michigan City by that time.

JB: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

EH: I have a sister who is four years younger than I am.

JB: How did you survive financially?

EH: Well, my mother took in boarders, after we moved to Michigan City. She made meals for the men who worked at the car factory, and also men who were prison guards whose families didn't live in Michigan City. She continued doing that until I was through school and could help support my sister and myself, and her. I got a job working at the Citizens bank after I finished high school.

JB: When you lived on the West side was the community aware of and affected by the prison at all?

EH: I think they just took that for granted. There was one time when a convict escaped during the day, and he came to the back door. My mother answered the door and was scared to death. He wanted to hide in the attic, but mother told him she had prison guards coming there for supper, and she just couldn't do that. He left. I think she gave him a stocking cap to get rid of him. He left, and then when the prison guards came in for supper at night, they'd heard about it and asked her about it. Nobody blamed her for what she had done. You see, we didn't have a telephone. Very few neighbors had telephones. She was afraid of what he might do anyway. I don't know if they ever caught the man or not; I don't remember that. But that's the closest to it. Otherwise, we could go over and play in the prison park. We would take picnics up there sometimes, and there would be trustees in the park who ....that we would talk to, and we weren't afraid or worried about it.

JB: You say you worked at the bank.

EH: I worked at the bank up; until ....I left in 1930, just as the depression was getting going. I went to college then.

JB: You were working at the bank at the time of the crash.

EH: Yes. Funny thing, I don't actually remember the day of the crash, and they didn't have the bank closing until after Roosevelt became president in 1932. My sister worked there then, and she remembers something of that, but for some reason it didn't impress me very much at that time. There were five banks in Michigan City at that time. I can't remember the years for this, but the Peoples' State bank which was in the building the First Federal is now, Savings and loan; it went out of business. But the people who had money in the bank, I mean the depositors didn't lose any money. Their accounts were paid off, or transferred to other banks, or something. They made some kind of arrangements. And then later the Michigan City Trust and Savings bank merged with the First National bank. The presidents of the two banks were brothers, so they merged.

JB: What were their names?

EH: Vail. Will Vail of the First National bank and G.T. Vail from the Trust and Savings bank. So there were three banks in town then until, oh, I don't know when it was when the First National bank and the Merchants' National bank merged into the present First Merchants'.

JB: What year was it that you changed from the junior to senior high?

EH: I became a senior high teacher in the fall of 1958. From then on I taught German almost exclusively, except for summer school when I taught English.

JB: Had you taught German before?

EH: No, I ....well, we had a course in junior high called General language which, one semester of eighth grade kids had one semester in which they tried out Latin, French, and German. I taught that for a few years, but .... my college major was German. I had minors in English and History. But since I didn't have a job in that, when I worked on my masters degree I worked on what amounted to a major in Social Studies. So I taught mostly History and English then until I went to senior high and began teaching German.

JB: Was that a big change for you?

EH: Oh yes. It was a big change. It was much easier to teach in the senior high school, especially in an academic subject which was an elective. Classes were smaller than they were in junior high school. I'd enjoyed teaching in junior high school as far as that goes, when after the first few years, through experience, I'd learned how to control kids better. It was much easier teaching in the foreign language department, than it was teaching in junior high school.

JB: When you say learning how to control the kids...

EH: How to manage the classroom. How to keep the kids busy and prevent them from getting into trouble.

JB: What methods did you acquire with experience?

EH: I think for one thing, I relaxed myself, and was able to keep a friendlier rapport between myself and the students, and probably created less hostility on their part than they would have had otherwise. I learned how to, prepare lessons that would keep everybody busy all the time and therefore not have time to get into trouble.

JB: Was language required?

EH: No, it was never required for graduation, but kids who were going into college, for many years, were expected to present two years of credit in some foreign language in order to gain entrance into most colleges. That also was relaxed later, but that was that way for a long time.

JB: Because of that were the students more interested in the subject? Were they less inclined to cause trouble?

EH: Well, the kids who took a foreign for the most part were academically more able to do good schoolwork, and were more interested than some of the others who didn't. They were at least moderately interested in doing the assignments the teacher gave. At least some of them more than others, and some less than others. On the whole, they were among the brighter students of the school, so it was easier to interest them in it. That's the way I interpret it.

JB: Was the German club already formed when you moved to the high school.?

EH: No, because German hadn't been taught for several years because of the war, German had dropped out. When I started teaching German, why, I just remembered from my teacher's training that it was a good thing to have some extra-curricular activity going along with it ...and so I organized the German club.

JB: What did they do? did you meet informally?

EH: Yes. Sometimes afterschool, in the classroom, have programs and show movies. Sometimes we would meet in students' homes, where we would be invited--have a potluck supper, and play some games, or sing some German songs, or see slides from someone who had visited a German speaking country, or something of that sort. It was never anything very great, but it was something that went into the books as extra-curricular activity.

JB: Were the students encouraged or discouraged in any way by the school board and superintendent?

EH: I don't think so. I think the counselling staff, and before they were former teachers, were told to help the students to make up their own minds. They weren't to be pushed into any subject. If they were going into college, they were told what college requirements were. In a few cases where students were over-ambitious, as compared to their academic ability, they may have been advised, but there was no compulsion on any one course to take.

JB: Did that change in the sixties at all?

EH: Not as far as I know.

JB: You taught up until what year?

EH: Up until 1975.

JB: Did the social unrest of the sixties enter into our schools?

EH: Oh, I'm sure it did. We had the fuss they made about boys' haircuts, and about girls wearing slacks to school; and then of course came the unrest of the black children. That affected the schools, just like it affected all the rest of community. Those things. Not much different from the rest of the world.

JB: Did the students have any particular heroes, idols, people that they emulated?

EH: Well, of course, during the war, airplane pilots were the heroes. I would say half the boys thought they were going to be airplane pilots when they grew up. Just like earlier kids all want to be policemen when they grow up. A lot of girls wanted to be nurses, I guess because nursing seemed to be a romantic kind of thing. That sort of thing. By the time they got through high school those ideas became more realistic. But that was the ideal. Of course there were always boys who wanted to be baseball stars, football heroes, just as there are today.

JB: What were the conditions like in the high school in the fifties?

EH: Well, the kids were better dressed, better fed, more vitamins, and we had better supplies to work with in the schools: more text books, and we were able to teach a little more individual instruction because they would hire more teachers then. Class sizes were better than they had been before, so that effected the schools in that way. And Mr. Smith was, I might say, innovative, in trying to get new programs into the schools to make things better for the students, and prepare them better for life after school. Since there was more money available, and salaries began to be better, that all affected schools.

JB: What new programs did Mr. Smith affect?

EH: Well, the one that I was most concerned with was what he called the "CORE" program, and it was the hope that they would find teachers who were trained in both social studies and in English, and they combined into what was called a CORE program. So the students went to that one teacher for two periods a day, instead of to two different teachers for that time, and the teacher was supposed to blend these two subjects together, and to teach things that were, well, let's say, to help them decide on a career, and to teach English grammar from a more practical point of view. The trouble with it was they couldn't find enough teachers who were trained in both the English and the Social Studies, and so for the seventh and eighth grade they would hire a Social Studies teacher who didn't like teaching English, and would sort of slight that. The reverse would be true: they had an English teacher who didn't like teaching the Social Studies;

Ch. there must have been twenty years of CORE, I don't remember exactly. Rather recently they went back to dividing the subjects, so that again today they have English and Social Studies as separate subjects.

JB: Do you remember any other programs that he instituted?

EH: Well, he tried to make all subjects more closely related to life, but I think all good teachers did that no matter what the subject was, but that's the kind of thing. There always were, since I started to teach, vocational subjects and commercial subjects of various kinds. Then of course English and History and Social Studies, and within those subjects many of the same things were taught, or they attempted to teach them, that may be taught in separate classes today.

JB: There has been talk lately that the younger students are coming up into the high schools and don't have the education that they once had. Do you think that that is true?

EH: I think that the one thing that may affect that is there was pressure for quite a few years to pass everybody, but I think there always were kids who got through school without being very well prepared. During the depression years the classes were so big that if you flunked somebody, then the next years classes were even bigger. Part of that problem was always with us. And more kids quit school when they were sixteen, mostly because they weren't doing well in school. In more recent years, even the very poorest ones stay on and are pushed through when they shouldn't be, and the teachers were under pressure to get them through. Of course, they were always told to teach them something before they got out; that's not so easy to do in a practical basis if you have kids who have low ability, or low motivation. You have them there in your class and you do the best you can.

JB: They pushed them through because they thought that once they got out of high school they would enter into jobs where education wasn't needed?

EH: I guess that was it I guess, or else they didn't know what to do with them. Partly it's that.

JB: Was the, sports program always as active as it is today?

EH: It's always been an important part of school life. And of course, in recent years there's been more of it for girls than before, but there always was, depending on the personality and disposition of the girls' gym teacher. There were always some girls' sports, and there always have been a lot of them, say football and basketball, particularly, and track, for boys from junior high and up anyway. More teachers were hired to do that sort of thing, than there were for the girls. Girls usually had only one gym teacher, and it was up to that teacher to provide them with athletic opportunities.

JB: Would you have any suggestions about the school system.

EH: Well, I think there's something very good about this movement to get back to basics: insist on reading and writing and arithmetic. And that doesn't mean there shouldn't be anything else. I think music and art and the sciences and all the rest of these, the foreign languages, are good

things too, but maybe the teacher shouldn't be driven to get in to so many side activities, and to give the attention that most of them would like to give. Just straight teaching of the basic subjects.

JB: Has the stress changed on music and art over the years?

EH: Well, there was a time when it expanded quite a bit, and then financial problems began.

JB: When was that?

EH: I would say after the war. In the fifties when money was more available, they expanded those things. Then there was a cut-back a few years ago when money was scarce and they had to cut out some of the supervisory positions in art and music. That affected the elementary schools more probably than the secondary schools.

JB: Have you enjoyed teaching?

EH: Yes. While I was a teacher, no regrets about it.

JB: Do any of your former students ever come by and say hello and howdy-do?

ER: A few of them, and quite often I meet them on the street, or in the supermarket, or something like that. They'll talk to me about school experiences and that sort of thing. But a lot of them don't, of course. I recognize a lot of them on the street, and a lot of times people will speak to me and I assume they were probably former students of mine. I can't remember their names, or they've changed their looks since they were junior high kids, or senior high for that matter.

JB: In Michigan City itself, what have been the changes that you've noticed the most?

EH: Well, the growth of population and the desertion of the central part of the city since the Marquette Mall was set up.

JB: Have there been any positive aspects?

EH: Oh yes. I think there are quite a few people who are looking for ways to improve. I think housing is better for most people, and you read in the paper about efforts to revitalize the downtown part. The building of the library and the city hall, things down at the North end ...our efforts in that direction. I think eventually they'll work that out and we'll be glad that things went the way they did down there.

JB: It has been a pleasure, and very informative. Thank you much.