

Transcript of Oral History Tape #T-6-130

One Room Schoolhouse Teacher

Transcribed by Mary Ann Vartia 08/12/03.

Interviewer Brennan: This is an interview with Frank L. McCullough, November 14, 1978. Mr. McCullough, could you tell me the date of your birth?

Mr. McCullough: October 15, 1907. I was born in Brazil, Indiana.

Interviewer Brennan: Were you born on a farm?

Mr. McCullough: No. Mother and dad lived in town at the time, but the grandparents were on the farm.

Interviewer Brennan: Did you move out to the farm?

Mr. McCullough: Within about a year, yes. My mother and dad had separated and then I was, from there on, was a farm boy.

Interviewer Brennan: Do you remember any of your early experiences on the farm? Some of the chores that you did?

Mr. McCullough: Uh, oh, yes. We farm boys always had all kinds of chores to do: Cutting kindling, carrying wood, milking cows, feeding hogs, taking care of chickens, gathering eggs. Well, you just start from there on. That's every night and morning. Then you had the regular farm work, garden work, working around the fields.

Interviewer Brennan: What kind of a farm was it? What sort of crops were raised there?

Mr. McCullough: Well, it was a small farm; and my grandfather was old at the time. When I say old, to a kid anyone past 50 or 60 seems old, you know; and he was about, I would say, near between 50 and 60 at the time I was very small. And he had a 40-acre farm; and we were farming on a very small scale really.

Interviewer Brennan: Was it a self-subsisting farm?

Mr. McCullough: Basically, yes. Of course, he had a small Civil War pension; but I think that didn't amount to too much. They were very small.

Interviewer Brennan: Where did your grandfather come from originally?

Mr. McCullough: He originally came from around Cincinnati area; and, in fact, you know all of the southern half of the state, the people came down the Ohio River in the early days and then settled southern Indiana first. It's about a hundred years older than northern Indiana is, the settlements down there.

Interviewer Brennan: Is that how he happened to come into Indiana.

Mr. McCullough: Yes, I'm sure. Yes. See, McNeal(sp?) was his name, Francis Marion McNeal; and he had been, I would say, of Scotch ancestry that had come over from Scotland and then settled in around Cincinnati.

Interviewer: Did you say that he was a veteran of the Civil War?

Mr. McCullough: That is right. He went into the Civil War as a young lad in the Ohio Regiment. Later on, joined a Kentucky regiment; but at the start, I think, nearly all the boys in those early days lied about their age to get in earlier because they wanted in. And he was a drummer boy at the start, and then later went into a Kentucky infantry as a regular soldier and then he was promoted to captain later. And after the freedom of the slaves in 1863, January 1, a lot of the Negroes came north and joined the north side and later he was given charge of the Negro regiment toward the end of the war, as a captain over that.

Interviewer Brennan: Would he ever relate to you any of the Civil War stories?

Mr. McCullough: Well, a little bit. His Civil War stories were not usually of the gruesome type; but, oh, he told about being in Pittsburgh Landing and Shiloh.

Interviewer Brennan: Was he in the fighting at Shiloh and the Pittsburgh Landing?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, yes. Yeah, yeah. I think he was down in there when the, ah—the war in the west, you know, when Grant was there, went better than the war in the east in the Civil War. And he was through the Civil War part in the west, captured as a prisoner once and spent time in that notorious prison down near Savannah, Georgia, I think.

Interviewer Brennan: What did he do after the war?

Mr. McCullough: Well, he had been a single man and before the war, he taught school, I think, a year or two; and after the war, he went into the grocery business with a friend whom he thought he could trust and the grocery business failed. I don't know exactly why, but it might be that they weren't very good businessmen, or something. And so, he then became, what you might say, a young soldier and then later was married up around Terre Haute; and that was in the coal fields, the days of the deep mines. Then, after that, I think they went—when they had one or two children, took a notion to go west because there were free government lands in the West for the soldiers.

Interviewer Brennan: About what year was that, do you think?

Mr. McCullough: Well, I think they started west about probably 1883 or '84. I know I had an aunt and an uncle that were born here in Indiana. My mother was born in Illinois, and they took up a homestead in Kansas, and I had an aunt who was born in Kansas. They went with a—after they left Kansas, they went up the Oregon Trail with a covered wagon and settled in Washington State, and I had another aunt that was born in Spokane, Washington. So they were scattered out all the way along the line going up there. And my grandmother used to tell me some stories about the Indian attacks.

Interviewer Brennan: That she had seen? Or that she had heard about?

Mr. McCullough: I think it was mainly that they had heard about, but they were pretty scary, really. They weren't exactly imaginary. I think you have to understand at the time of the Oregon Trail, people were all going west; and there weren't any railroads, only just a little spot here and there they had a railroad. They didn't have them completed. And when they got up in Wyoming, there was reported that there was going to be an Indian attack, and about that time one of granddad's horses had stepped in a gopher hole and broke a leg, and he was trying to get another horse to make a team for his covered wagon, and that they found that there was a railroad that they could ride from there across from Cheyenne over to Oregon. And grandmother persuaded him to not go ahead in the covered wagon, and the rest of that wagon train was all wiped out.

Interviewer Brennan: And he came back to Indiana and settled?

Mr. McCullough: Well, they lived in Washington State for, I supposed, about five years; and by that time, the Northern Pacific Railroad was finished, and they road all the way back to Indiana on the railroad, coming—I think it came through Montana, Dakotas, Minnesota, and down into Chicago, and came back on the train. And that shows how the West was being opened by the railroads.

Interviewer Brennan: You lived, you moved in with your grandparents and then you started school. What was the first school that you went to?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, I went to a one-room school at southeast of Brazil in Jackson Township. It was called the Wesley Chapel School, and it was where we had all eight grades in one room. The building is still standing there, but it is not a school anymore; but in those days, they had about, I think, ten schools in that township. All of them were one rooms, except one school or two that had two rooms.

Interviewer Brennan: Did you attend all eight years?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, yes, I was in...

Interviewer Brennan: ...in the one-room school?

Mr. McCullough: ...the one-roomschools for all eight years.

Interviewer Brennan: Did you walk to school and did you have far to walk?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, no. I had only a short distance. I think I walked about a quarter of a mile, but some people walked as far as two miles to a one-room school because the one-room schools were always placed two miles apart, so if you figure how that the longest distance you could possibly have to walk would be two miles. They were on corners on the crossroads usually.

Interviewer: Do you think you got a good education in the one-room schoolhouse?

Mr. McCullough: Well, that depends. I, uh, I think that the one-room school that I had, for the most part, very good teachers and now a one-room school

you could have a good education or a bad education depending on how good a teacher you had. And I think for the most part I had pretty good teachers. I remember Mary Allen was an excellent teacher.

Interviewer Brennan: Were you kept pretty busy during the day?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, yes. We, well, actually it was, again, up to the teacher. And the teacher could keep you very busy or not so very busy, but I think there's things about the one-room school that they have seen as an advantage even in the last few years, in... Of course, every likes to bad mouth the one-room school, but it wasn't really all that bad if you had, like I said, a good teacher that could organize and really work hard and could make the classes go. Your classes run from six to eight minutes long for each class; but, for example, suppose that a fella is a pretty sharp kid, boy or girl, and you are in the third grade and you get to listen ahead as to what the fourth grade is doing a year before you get to it, because you got your work done fast and you listened, and then you know how to do the fractions actually a year before you get into fractions, and thing like that, so, ah...

Interviewer Brennan: Are there cases of being promoted, say, skipping a third or fourth grade?

Mr. McCullough: Once in a while, in the early days, they did skip a grade; but that was not very common. A lot of times they repeated a grade, too. In other words, not because the teacher wanted them to, but because the kid himself wanted to. For example, if a person didn't want to go to high school and you had a kid that was 16 years old and was through the eighth grade, if they--well, I said 16, let's back up a year--let's say they were 14 or 15 and there was a state law that said you were supposed to go to school until you were 16 and they didn't want to go to high school because there was no bus to ride and they just didn't think it was necessary, they were farm kids, they were going to be farmers anyway, so they would go back and repeat the eighth grade over again. I've heard of one fella that took it over three times. Yes. It didn't hurt anything, they thought. They just took it over so they could go to school.

Interviewer Brennan: What would you do during your recesses?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, we played games. They, ah...

Interviewer Brennan: Can you remember any of the games?

Mr. McCullough: Yes. One of the most common games is what we called Blackman. Now up here the same game was played and they called it Miley Bright. Same game. Miley Bright, and the other places they played that same game, and they called it Pom Pom Pull Away, which was another name for the same game, only variations. Then there were certain types of little party type games that they played, dusty miller and Skip-to-ma-Lou, and things like that sometimes, the older children would play. The little ones would play in the sandboxes or something like that. If you had a rainy day out in the one-room school, of course, the teacher would let you kind of do what you pleased, but a lot of times they would want to have a little game of Fruit Basket Upset, they called it. It was where everybody was given the name of a fruit and then someone--there was always one seat short, there was not enough seats--so they would go--the person who was it would stand up front and call off the names of

two fruits and then say, "Change," and the two kids that had those two fruit names had to change seats. And while they were changing, the fella up in front tried to steal one of their seats, and then the fella left out had to be it. So that was a funny game, and we had other little games like Blind Fold and I Spy and different things that they could play in rainy days, and it wasn't bad really. We had a lot of fun.

Interviewer Brennan: Was it your decision or was it usually the decision of the parents as to who went onto high school?

Mr. McCullough: Well, it was kind of a combination affair. Actually, it depends on how you look at things like that. A lot of times in the farm families the parents maybe would think that the boy had enough education if he could do arithmetic to the Rule of Three, as the saying is, like up to cube root, well, he wasn't too bad off and he was good at add, subtract, multiply and divide and fractions and square root and so forth, and if he could do common budgetary items and so forth.

Interviewer Brennan: Enough to get by on the farm?

Mr. McCullough: Yes. They thought in those days that was plenty for a farm boy to have, and girls were even supposed to be less necessary to be educated in those days than boys were; but, of course, if you lived in town, why you went to high school. Fellas from the farm, I suppose maybe one-fourth or one-third was all that ever had an idea that they wanted to go to high school. And, of course, I lived out six miles from town; and so in order to go to high school, there was no school bus, I had to figure out some way to get there. And then that would mean there was happened to be a little train about two miles away I could ride for Fifteen Cents a ride on, or I could take an old bicycle and ride. In most of the fair weather I rode a bicycle that distance.

Interviewer Brennan: What made you decide to go to high school?

Mr. McCullough: Well, I decided to go to high school I suppose because I was interested in education, and I guess I was a pretty good student, and well, I think maybe my grandparents encouraged me a little bit. You see grandfather in his younger days had been a teacher for a little bit for a year or two, I'm not sure, way back around the Civil War times.

Interviewer Brennan: When you were in high school, did you know then that you wanted to go into college and become a teacher?

Mr. McCullough: I think I made up my mind somewhere along about the time I was maybe half way through high school, yes, that I did want to be a teacher because there wasn't enough chance to really make a living on that small a farm and in order to do something for yourself I wanted to get an education if I could. And I had a little encouragement from, like I said, from home; and I believe that the proximity or the nearness of the State Teachers College had something to do with it, too. It was only 15 miles from Brazil to Terre Haute so I could get over there and back on a bus real easy, or on a streetcar. In those days we had interurbans that went everywhere all over Indiana, you know. The interurbans were just all over.

Interviewer Brennan: What was it like in high school? Did you have trouble? Or was it fairly easy?

Mr. McCullough: Well, I tell you, high school in those days was peculiar to what it is now. Now everybody goes to high school. In those days the city kids all went to high school and just a few kids from the country, and the country kids were more or less treated like outsiders.

Interviewer Brennan: Did you get some of the country bumpkin ridicule?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, yes, and the country kids were, like I say, they were not part of the gang. The city kids were the gang, as the saying is. They'd been together all their school life, and the country kids were just from here and there and everywhere. And so, they were not part of the group, and so I kind of felt like an outsider for a good while. I think it was until I got into sports that—before I ever felt like I belonged there, and I didn't really, I didn't really work hard in high school for a couple of years, I guess because I felt like I was a loner, I was an outsider. And when I finally got into an auto mechanics class with another friend who was the football captain, he talked me into coming out for spring football, and that's when I begun to get really get interested in school and I was a junior at the time. Then I went out for football as a senior and made the team, and my life changed a little bit.

Interviewer Brennan: What position did you play?

Mr. McCullough: Well, in those days we played both ways, but as it happened, I was the first substitute on the line from one end to the other. From, you might say, from tackle to tackle all the way through the first guy that got carried off the field, I went in. And in those days, you played both ways until somebody got knocked out and carried out, you might say. They didn't substitute that much.

Interviewer Brennan: Both offense and defense?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah.

Interviewer Brennan: Were your grades good enough to get into college? Were grades a criteria to get into college then?

Mr. McCullough: Ah, there wasn't a great deal of difficulty with getting into the State Teachers College. Oh, I suppose my grades were better than I let on like they were, but the first two years in high school I never tried because I felt kind of lonely. The last two years in high school I worked hard, and I graduated in the upper fifteen percent of my class, and that made me happy.

Interviewer Brennan: What was college like?

Mr. McCullough: College, well, college in those early days was kind of like a preparation to go back and teach into a one-room school it seemed like more than anything else. It was not nearly so technical as college is nowadays, but we were given a little bit of child psychology. We were told how to teach reading and poetry and arithmetic and art and spelling and all the different methods courses. That, plus your child psychology and your history of

education, and that was just about all you had at the first year level there. And, of course, in those days, Indiana State you could go one year and then get a two-year teacher's license; and that was about 1925 and '26 was the first year I went and at that time two years was all an elementary teacher was a course amounted to. A high school teacher had a four-year course at that time.

Interviewer Brennan: So, how, what—you went to college two years to qualify to be a one-room schoolhouse teacher?

Mr. McCullough: Yes, but really I went one year and then had a two-year license, which was only good for two years, so I taught two years. Then I went back and got another year, which finished all the elementary training. And then I had a five-year license, and in those days the county superintendent graded you on your, how well you did in teaching, which he called a success grade. And if you made a good success grade with the county superintendent and were successful in that for three years on your life—on that three years out of that five, on that five-year license, when you first finished and graduated—then after that you would get a life license for Grades One to Eight. And I have a life license yet someplace that I could teach any grade from One to Eight as long as I live.

Interviewer Brennan: Do you remember getting your first job and what it was like when you first started? Your enthusiasm?

Mr. McCullough: Yes, as it happens it was Clay City, Indiana, which was down at the other end of the county. As it happened it seemed like there wasn't an opening right in my home township, so I thought, and there was a little bit of politics being played right at that time. I think I should have gotten a job because there really was an opening, but I went and got a job down at the other end of the county. And then the trustee up at my home township came after me the last week of school, or the last week before school started, and said he had a job for me and I already had a job. So they were playing a little politics then, but it didn't amount to much. And so I started teaching in a one-room school near Clay City, Indiana, down at the other end of the county.

Interviewer Brennan: What year was that?

Mr. McCullough: That was in fall of 1926.

Interviewer Brennan: Were you a little anxious about starting? A little frightened? Or what were your feelings?

Mr. McCullough: Yes, sir, I was; and I think I had good reason to be. I was teaching on a one-room school. It was a very nice up-to-date school, too. It had furnace under the middle of it, one of these old one lungers. It was a

Interviewer Brennan: One lungers?

Mr. McCullough: Yeah, you know, one that had a register right straight above the furnace. And so that was much better than having just a pot bellied stove in the middle of the room, which was the kind we had in all those other one-room schools. So I was a little bit nervous about starting. Well, anyone

would be on a new job, of course; but there was an added extra something on this job because in this job the year before the big boys there had run the teacher out, and she didn't get to finish the year. And..

Interviewer Brennan: The big boys meaning the trustee?

Mr. McCullough: No, no, no, no, no. I mean the seventh and eighth grade boys. They gave her such a rough time. She had to drive a horse and buggy over there, and they had a little shed at the back of the building where she put her horse up. And they would take and tease that horse and tie knots in the harness and poke sticks at the horse and give this girl such a rough time that before the year was up she had to quit; and they thought it was great fun. So, when I started out at the Leapte(sp?) School, they were telling me those same stories about how they gave Ellen Sheely(sp?) such a rough time the year before. And I knew now--see I was, eight--, I wasn't quite 18. Let's see, I guess I was about 18 years old when I started teaching my first school. And I had boys in the eighth grade who were 16 and some of them were bigger than I was, or as big. And I had four boys in the eighth grade, it just happened, in that one-room school. Well, they wanted to wrestle and they wanted this, they wanted to try me out, you see. And so, it wasn't very long, I told them, I said, "One of these days I'll wear my old clothes and we'll just have a little wrestling match and we'll see who is best." Well, I was pretty quick. And so, the biggest one was Buck Archer and I said, "Now I'll take on Buck first, but take you on one at a time," and I said, "We'll..." I wore my old clothes one day, some overalls and we got out on the grass and we started to wrestling and I was pretty quick, as I said, and I got Buck down then I said, "Okay, Henry you come on here," and William and so forth. Pretty soon we had them all stacked one across the other like bags of grain and they all began to laugh and from then on we had a lot of fun. Really they found out that they couldn't quite get the better of me because I got the biggest guy down first. And then it wasn't very long after that these same boys wanted to have some kind of a team and I said, "well, look, let's go out in the woods and we'll cut a couple poles and we'll cut some basketball goals and we'll fix us a basketball court out here on the playground." And we did that, and we had a box social to make some money. I think we made about Twenty-five Dollars, and we brought some swing ropes and we--for the little kids--and we got some library books and a basketball for the big ones and we had no more trouble with that bunch of big boys that year--period As soon as they found out that I was interested in helping them organize teams and play games and fix the school up, why, they had no trouble.

Interviewer Brennan: How did your teaching methods change from, say, your first year to second year, and you know subsequent years?

Mr. McCullough: Well, I think that that is probably true with every beginning teacher, that you try things out that will work and then you stick with things that do work. And probably the teacher learns more the first year than they learned all four years of college if they went four years because no two teachers teach exactly the same method, I'm sure. What works for one doesn't really work for someone else. Maybe one can use one method, and some other person try it and they'd fall flat on their face. So they have to try a method and find out what'll work for them and then they more or less stick to that. And I think, ah..

Interviewer Brennan: How did your methods change with all these eight grades in one class?



Mr. McCullough: Well, I think that I found that I was doing a lot of things a lot like I suppose that I had been taught. I really believe that has a lot to do with it. If I had to think back on one or two of my better teachers that I had myself, and then I patterned some of my work after them, I think that that probably has more influence on you than what you learned in certain college classes, because a lot of times what the college teachers is talking is what worked for him and it sometimes just goes right on past you over your head. But the methods you were used to being taught by a lot of times is what sticks to you. And then another thing, I think, a lot of it depends on how good an organizer you are. If you could organize your classes, and we—and another thing is how ambitious you are. The one-room school, you'd be surprised how hard you had to work to make it really go because we did our own sweeping, for example, in the morning, while the building was warming up. And we had a one room, like I say, a stove in the middle of the room usually, and we'd be getting there an hour early and warming the room up and putting assignments on the board and sweeping the floors and getting the water bucket filled and coal buckets filled and everything ready before the children ever came. And if you do that for an hour ahead of time and then if you have classes about six to eight minutes long and you have to have, be honest about it and have every class and don't skip any of them, you're going to have a lot of papers and workbooks and so forth to carry home overnight, so you had an armload of stuff to carry home to grade every night. So, in order to keep on that merry-go-round you really had to work late in the night and early in the morning.

Interviewer Brennan: How many children did you usually have per class?

Mr. McCullough: The classes would generally run from one to four.

Interviewer Brennan: And how many you can—in all grades?

Mr. McCullough: Altogether about, I suppose, 26, 28 in the room, and usually you had all eight grades; and it would be possible, I think, only fair to say that in certain things you could combine classes. For example, if you had social studies in the seventh and eighth, sometimes you could combine them and have them together. We had history and geography separately. Sometimes we'd combine like a fifth and sixth grade health class together. And that way we would not have to have quite as many classes. And usually, in order to have all the classes that were required, for example, I was required to teach home economics, and

(Side one of tape ends.)

(Side two of tape begins.)

Interviewer Brennan: Could you tell me a little bit about disciplining in the one-room schoolhouse?

Mr. McCullough: The disciplining in a one-room school was strictly a one person deal; and, of course, you once in a while had a little problem with your parents, but it isn't like it is today. It usually was in reverse. In other words, if a child got into difficulty at school and got in a fight and the teacher had to get him in and probably after talking this whole situation over, they figured it was necessary to paddle somebody. If the word got back home, he probably got another paddling because the parents in those days

stood behind the teacher one hundred percent practically all the time. And that's quite a bit different from what it is today; and it seems that—well, very seldom did you have to do any paddling. It was, usually, it was like that first school I was telling you about. They were just trying you out. Kids try teachers to see how far you can push them; and when they know the limits, then usually that settles it, you know.

Interviewer Brennan: Was it your traditional switch and paddle? Or was it just a...

Mr. McCullough: Well, it depends with the teacher. Some teachers would use a regular paddle, some a switch, and sometimes they'd turn 'em over their knee. But actually I think that the respect that a teacher gets has an awful lot to do with how the parents and the children were brought to understand the whole situation to start with. You have to understand that the teacher was absolutely by themselves and on their own; and that's why that they once in a while if you had some big roughneck, as the saying is, in the upper grade, especially boys, that they could take and practically run out some little weak lady teacher that couldn't handle them. And that's what happened, like I said, the year before I went to a certain school.

Interviewer Brennan: You were mentioning something about spelling bees and what was the other thing with arithmetic?

Mr. McCullough: Mathematical—or math contest, we called them ciphering matches is what we called them. Actually, children enjoyed, especially on rainy days and Friday afternoons and like that toward the end of the week, you see maybe I should to back a little bit and tell you that we had what we called a rotary program. When I say a rotary program, you couldn't get all of your classes in into four blocks. You had to put it into five or six blocks.

Interviewer Brennan: What do you mean blocks?

Mr. McCullough: Blocks of classes in which you would get through. For example, if you had four classes set up, then for every—I mean four recitations set up in different subjects for every student in the school—if you have eight grades that would be four times eight is 32. Well, if you figure that all the time you've got in one day is to cover 32 classes and then suppose that in order to cover the curriculum you had to have 36 or 38 or 40 classes, because of the state requirements, you know. Then, you would have to have an extra block more than the four because 32 classes is about all you could cover in one day's time with four blocks of time. Like a morning recess was one block and recess to Noon was a second block, and Noon to third recess, or last recess was a third block, and the last recess till closing or dismissal time was the fourth block. Well, now, if you could cover 40, or 32 classes that would get every child having four classes in one day, and you still had more in the curriculum, you would have to have what you called a rotary program. And the rotary program would mean you'd take sections one, two, three, and four on Monday, on Tuesday morning start with section five, and then one, two, three. And then Wednesday, it would be four, five, one, two, you see. Just keep going like that so that over the run of the week instead of having arithmetic five times you would only have it four times, you see. Something on that order, but you'd cover your whole curriculum that way. Well, then, going back to these spelling matches, the children loved to spell because it was one of the pleasures they had and also

it became a kind of, kind of a team or like a, in a sense, like a team competition or like a substitute for that; and usually you had some good spellers. So, possibly on a Friday afternoon, you'd have children choose up sides and maybe get two of your best spellers or best leaders to choose up and then have children spell down. And they would spell until they tried to spell words on their own level as much as possible and maybe start with the lower grades and give them first grade words in the first grade and second grade words in the second grade, and right on up the line. Ah, and, whenever a child missed, then he'd have to take his seat. That was one way they did it. Another way they did it sometimes, because some people like to be in it more, they'd rather have it so that when you missed, you changed sides and see if you get everybody off one side over onto the other side. And there are other angles, too. Now, there's—rainy days just made a good recess thing, or Noon you could do that, or you could have a ciphering match. Say that maybe all your people—in the upper grades especially liked it, to have a ciphering match—choose up sides or else—and then send one from each side up and whoever got the right answer first to a long division problem would get a point for their side. Or, you could have it on the same order as the spelling match; and when two would go against each other, the one that lost would have to drop out of the contest. And you'd be surprised how hard they'd work to see if they could win one of those contests because every once in a while, the parents would be coming around and you'd put on a little program. You always had a Thanksgiving program or Christmas program and a last day program. Well, when you had those programs, you might end up by having a spelling match afterwards; and they'd want to show up well when the folks were there.

Interviewer Brennan: What was your last, what was the last day program? What...

Mr. McCullough: Oh, the last day program was—well, it was quite often like a May Day Program, but you would have recitations for the little ones and sometimes the bigger folks would put on plays, maybe that they had written, or different kinds of music or acting or so forth. It depends on how much the teacher was gifted at handling dramatics. Now every teacher has to be a little bit part ham, you know, for the kids to like it; and I think that they also have to be somewhat of a leader and they have to be able to converse with the kids at their own level, too. Well, anyway, the last day of school usually, if the teacher had been a success and the parents liked the teacher, they were nearly always surprised with the big dinner the last day. Well, when the big dinner was over, well then what you had for the rest of the day—outside of passing out the promotion report cards and so forth—was to have a program and maybe a little spelling match or something like that to end it up with. It made for good entertainment, really.

Interviewer Brennan: That's like a testimonial to the teacher and a little celebration for the kids?

Mr. McCullough: Yeah, yeah. And the kids got to show what they could do. That's the idea. And children should have a chance to show what they can do.

Interviewer Brennan: What would you say your biggest problems were in the one-room schoolhouse?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, probably the biggest problem was that we didn't have enough money for library supplies.

Interviewer Brennan: How did you get around this?

Mr. McCullough: We tried to earn money. We tried to bring books of our own. We tried to have box socials and pie suppers and so forth, which was somewhat popular in those early times, and maybe earn some money to buy it with. Sometimes it seemed that back in the early days, the 20s and the 30s and like that, the trustees just would not give you any money for library books. Now that has changed, of course, a great deal now; but I think books you have to earn you appreciate probably more than a lot that are given to you, too.

Interviewer Brennan: Would you say that your years of teaching in a one-room school house were preparation for your eventual principalship or principalhood in a...

Mr. McCullough: Well...

Interviewer Brennan: ...elementary school?

Mr. McCullough: Well, in some ways. But I think that I had taught in one-room schools, two-room schools, and then in small town departmental systems, like Rockville had, and then up here in homeroom situations. When I came to LaPorte, of course, our elementary schools went K through 6, which is just a little different. We didn't have a seventh and eighth grade; they were in the junior high school. But oh, a one-room school is a good preparation in a way—the teacher is absolutely on their own. They can't pass the buck to somebody else, like you have to go to the principal to be punished, or something like that. There is no passing the buck in a one-room school. You're it.

Interviewer Brennan: Did you enjoy teaching it?

Mr. McCullough: Yes, I think I did. I would do it all over again. I don't think that a person exactly teaches for the money, or at least you didn't in the early days. You taught because you liked kids, and it was something you liked to do. I don't say that the money didn't come in handy. It did, it was fair, and even in the Depression times, it was not bad when we stop and think about the fact that a lot of people were clear out of work.

Interviewer Brennan: Is that what you were doing during the Depression was teaching?

Mr. McCullough: Yes, I was teaching in a one-room school during the Depression. I was married in '33 so that, oh, well, yeah, I had quite a few responsibilities in the Depression times.

Interviewer Brennan: What were some of your impressions that remains from the Depression?

Mr. McCullough: Well, I think that the Depression, a lot of times, is more or less misunderstood. I think that people have the feeling that well; it was just like some of these little depressions we've had since World War II, but that's not true. The Big Depression was something that is not easily described. When all the factories stop and all the jobs stop and the only work there is is some kind of make-work job like a WPA, where you went out and dug the ditches along side the road, you want a job and there isn't any

job, and your family is hungry and it—well, every wheel in the factory stopped turning—you get the feeling that what's the use; there's nothing to do; I'm—here—I'm ready for a job and I can't work. And it's a terrible feeling really.

Interviewer Brennan: Did the soup lines—did they actually keep people alive? Would people have gone hungry if they weren't there?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, I think that's true. Yes, they did some good; and yet, it wasn't exactly what we needed really. What we needed was jobs of work, and see the change then when they put them to work with the WPA jobs was better yet than the soup lines. Actually, getting into the schools, we had a minimum salary law in 1924, I think, of Eight Hundred Dollars a year and that was still in effect during the Depression so that if a teacher had a job, they froze onto that job during the Depression, they didn't give it up because there were ten teachers applying for every one job it seemed like, or five teachers at least. There was a lot of people out of work, and anybody that had ever had a college education, they wanted to go back and teach school because there was a job, you see. And you know schools had to run in the Depression because children were still there and you had to have school.

Interviewer Brennan: What did you do after the Depression? Did you continue teaching in the one-room schools?

Mr. McCullough: I taught in the one-room schools through the Depression, but along about 1938 there was a change in the state legislature. They made a law all through the state legislature in Indiana that elementary teachers would have four years of training the same as the high school teachers. Before that it'd been two years, and the high school teachers had had four. And so, in 1938, that law was put in and I had to take in some extra work before, thinking about going into high school work maybe or something like that. But anyway, the—in 1938 up to 1941, I finished my other two years and graduated in '41 from Indiana State; and then left the one-room school and went over to Rockville where there was a small town system and then came from there to LaPorte in 1944. So, I was at Rockville during the war and then up here after, well from '44 on.

Interviewer Brennan: What were your first impressions of LaPorte?

Mr. McCullough: Well, I was, I guess somewhat of a country boy with a little bit of hayseed in my feelings, as the saying is, being a farm boy and used to the country kids. And I suppose I was a little bit overawed by it; but still children are children and I enjoyed the school in LaPorte. I started out in the Lincoln School under Mr. Porter and had a Sixth Grade and I think we had about 48 or 49 in 6B, 6A, all in one room then, because the KOP had us all crowded around here; and that is quite a large class, you know.

Interviewer Brennan: Did you find that more difficult to teach? Or to instruct and discipline than the one-room schools with all the kids?

Mr. McCullough: Well, times were changing. The wartime was different from the Depression time. Depression time everybody was downhearted because there was no work. In the war time there was plenty of jobs and everybody had a happy-go-lucky feeling. You could to out any day and get four or five jobs if you wanted that many, or you could handle it; and so, it became a completely

different ballgame in the wartime. Money was flowing free and everybody was kind of a happy-go-lucky. It was a different situation. Not that the wartime, or that the war wasn't serious, I don't mean that. But I mean that the average people back home were either working in a war plant or working somewhere and had a good job and everything was going along on a different kind of a set of values than it was in the Depression. And so, I came to LaPorte, and I liked it, and I stayed, and I was glad I did. And then I taught from '44 to '74 here in LaPorte. I was in three different schools, Lincoln, Park, and Maple. Was a teacher at first and then became principal over at Maple for 17 years, and then retired.

Interviewer Brennan: How was being a principal different from being a teacher? A lot more responsibility?

Mr. McCullough: Well, it's a different setup, yes. Actually, in being a teacher, you're dealing with children and once in a while with their parents, but basically it's with children. When you're a principal you think of yourself as being kind of between the school and the parents and a lot of times you're dealing with parents and, of course, sometimes you're dealing with children, too, and your teachers; but basically, you're a little farther away from the children. I guess it's more of an administrative type of thing; and actually, I'm not so sure that anyone that really loves children should get into being a principal, or being into administration; but of course, somebody has to do the job and I enjoyed it. It was all right, I liked it.

Interviewer Brennan: Were you an innovator in some new programs here in LaPorte? Grade schools?

Mr. McCullough: Yes, I did a little bit, but I think it was because of my interest. I was more, I was interested in sports because I had done some high school coaching and some grade school coaching and so forth; and when I came to LaPorte, the kids were wanting to have teams, but there was no teams below the junior high school. And I remember one boy, when Park was playing Lincoln, accidentally got his leg broken. Now this was not when we had organized games. This was when the kids just got out and organized them themselves, and he got a leg broken. And Mr. Boston and I got to talking about it and we said, "Why didn't we supervise these games so they wouldn't be so dangerous?" And so we got started to having some supervised play, and I guess that I was really responsible for starting some of the leagues for the elementary schools. Now, they were developed afterwards much more by Bob Uhlemann, but to start with, I guess, I came here in 1945 and in the spring of '46 we had our first softball league where team had a, every school had a team. And then in 1946 in the fall, we organized the basketball league. It was first playing outdoors, or playing down at St. John's School; and then later, we got, the Tenth Street School had the gym and we played all our games at Tenth Street in basketball. So that was when Tenth Street belonged out in the country, was part of the country school system and didn't even—wasn't even inside the city. But Mr. Boston was very helpful on that; he would go along with it. We were not getting paid. We were doing it for fun, as the saying is.

Interviewer Brennan: Who was Mr. Boston?

Mr. McCullough: Mr. Boston was the former superintendent of schools. Paul Boston was here. And, by the way, he was the one who brought me here from

down at Rockville; but anyway, he was interested in sports; and being kind of a sports enthusiast, why he helped me get leagues started. And when he started remodeling schools right after the war, every time he remodeled one, he put a community room on it he called it, which was a kitchen and a gym. And so, every new grade school that was remodeled had a kitchen and a gym; and the first thing you know we had gymnasiums all over the place for use for gym classes and for sports and like that. And those things all got started around 1946, '47, '48, and up through '52. We were going with four sports in the elementary schools before we ever got paid anything for it. Then we got paid Fifty Dollars for coaching four sports. Bob Uhlemann followed up, though, and developed it a lot more than what I did at the start, but I was the starter of it along with Paul Boston and Russell Palm. Russell Palm helped a lot. He was another principal of the Park School.

Interviewer Brennan: Were you glad to get into the principal office? Or did you like teaching? Or how did that come about?

Mr. McCullough: Well, I guess it kind of comes about in a peculiar way. When somebody, some principal retires, then there is an opening and they ask somebody if they'd like to be a principal. Well, there's two or three things. You have to be wanting the job, for one thing; and another thing, you have to have a license for it. Now I came in at an earlier time when I could get my master's degree and my supervisor's license for elementary supervisor and elementary principalship all at the same time I got my master's because the requirements were such. I got it through Indiana University. The requirements were such if you took the right courses, well you could qualify; and the elementary principal's license was done as in elementary administration, but if you took the right courses, like elementary school finance, child psychology and school business, research on T-500 and some courses like that were required, then we would qualify also for elementary supervisor's license at the same time we got the elementary principal's license. So I had it from that earlier time. Now if you try to get the same thing, you have to have practically a doctor's degree to get it, which I think they have it a little bit overloaded or you might say overpriced. I have peculiar feelings about some of these higher degrees.

Interviewer Brennan: What are your feelings about the change in education over the years? And what changes? What important changes have you seen?

Mr. McCullough: Well, sometimes it seems like the changes in education, of course, I've been outlining the change from the one-room school to the city school to the larger school. We get more quality in this equipment that we have and the libraries we have and the media centers we have and all these other things and the buses and the food service, but when you get right down to it a lot of these are not really teaching. They are extra services, like health services, transportation services, food services, and like that. When you get right down to it, the basic thing in teaching is a student that wants to learn and a teacher that wants to teach.

Interviewer Brennan: Do you think that elementary kids want to learn or that they're coerced a little bit into learning?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, it depends; that depends. Some of them want to learn, some of them don't; but I suppose you had that in the early days, too.

Interviewer Brennan: Has that changed at all? The desire to learn and the learning ability?

Mr. McCullough: A lot of that has to do with what is taught at home. If the people at home respect reading and writing and arithmetic and reading good books and good magazines and so forth, then the teachers—or the child has that kind of an attitude. And a lot of that attitude comes from home. We have had the form of the school has changed, but still the basic problem is a child that wants to learn and a teacher that wants to teach and whether it is in a one-room school or two-room school or a forty-room school doesn't seem to make all that much difference.

Interviewer Brennan: Or a teacher that can make the child want to learn?

Mr. McCullough: Oh, yes. That's part of it. That's where you come in the ham part of selling your product, you see. That's where the ham part comes in. Actually, of course, times have changed and requirements have changed and so forth. I think that one thing that is quite obvious to me that the more things become different, the more they become the same. Now we were using the A-B-C method in teaching with the phonics, heavy emphasis on phonics in the late 20s and early 30s. Then we got away from that in reading and we used the word sight method and then we got further on an we're trying to speed it up and speed it up more until we got to the place that kids didn't have enough phonics and didn't have enough building of the A-B-C method, as the saying is, until they got so there were so many poor readers we had a lot of remedial reading going. And then they began to come back and say now it's a good idea if we would take and teach linguistics and begin to get strong on phonics again and also they begin to group children three grades in one room, which is the ungireatest time area that they've been talking about lately, and that is really going back to what the same thing we used in '29 and '30 and '31. It is the same thing only under a different name of the method we use, so as you travel around in reading, sometimes you run around in circles and come back to the same place you've been.

Interviewer Brennan: How would you sum up your forty-some years of teaching?

Mr. McCullough: Forty-seven. Well, I loved it. I would do it all again. I think the young people are the hope of tomorrow. There's no question about that. I think we have learned a few things. I think at the present time the government is getting its nose into the school business too much. I also think television has hurt the schools, more than helped. It used to be that children'd come home at night with a book to read and if they trouble, dad would listen to them read and he'd help with the hard words or mom would. Now when they come home the TV is roaring and they couldn't possibly read or study and if they want to shut the TV off, why the old man gets mad. So, the TV has been a hindrance to reading and study most of the time. Now once in a while you have a good program they ought to watch on TV, once in a while; but you have to hunt hard to find those.

Interviewer Brennan: Channel 11?

Mr. McCullough: Yes, that is a good one, and I think it's great; but you see there's so many different levels of the children's education that you can't get it all on Channel 11 at the right level for the right kid. Now Sesame Street is great, too. Oh, yes. Sesame Street is great. Oh, yes.



Interviewer Brennan: I want to thank you very much. I think it went very well.

Mr. McCullough: I appreciate this, and I will say that I think that we're going to readjust if we get the government to not to be quite so nosy in the schools. Let the teachers and the parents run their own school, and we'll get back to some of the basics of good reading and good music and things like that, that we still will have good schools. I think we will.

(Side two of tape ends.)