

Oral History Interview with Doris Shawler  
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By: Pam Bayes, Kristin Nash, & Sarah Stone

**PB: How many years did you attend school and in what years were they?**

DS: I began school in a one-room country school just east of Marshall. I attended a country school for seven years and then moved to the town of West Union and attended school there for one year and high school four years and then I went away to college at Blackburn College, which was self-help. Everybody worked part time to pay for their room and board. I attended school there two years and graduated with a degree they called an AA degree, which is an associate degree.

**PB: What did you major in at your college?**

DS: I was going to do something in the areas of science but I decided I needed to take some time out to earn some money first. I started teaching in a one-room schoolhouse in 1947 south of West Union. I had twelve students in four grades. Which all four grades were in the same room.

**PB: How long did you and the students attend school?**

DS: The schools then operated for eight months of the year. We got out the first of May instead of the first of June like you do now. School teachers at that time got paid one hundred dollars per month. If you had a one-room schoolhouse you did your own janitor work, built the fires, and took care of all of it.

**SS: Did you have a lot of subjects like we currently have now?**

DS: We had all of the subjects but you didn't always follow the same sequence. I had first, second, fourth, and eighth graders. Sometimes if you had fourth graders and fifth graders you would use the fourth grade geography book one year and the next year you would use the fifth grade geography book for both groups so sometimes they might study the fifth grade geography book before they would study the fourth grade geography book. But the reading series you followed sequence just as they would today in the school system.

**PB: How big was the school?**

DS: Well it was one of the larger one-roomed schoolhouses. It had its own cloakroom, an entry hall and a furnace room. It was one of the newer one-roomed schoolhouses. It wasn't as old as some of the schoolhouses at that time.

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**SS: Do you know if it is still standing?**

DS: It is still standing and it has been made into a home. People are living there. It has been a home for a long time. The year that I taught there in 1947-48 was the last year the school was opened. Then they moved their students up to West Union to a large brick school with four rooms and course the same thing was happening in the Marshall area. They were closing the one-room schoolhouses and moving the children into town. I think Clarksville had smaller schools that were brought into their school because it was larger. We had directors that ran each school and they were given so much money to pay the bills of the schools. Those directors would be like our school board now. They did the hiring and firing and took care of any problems that took place in the country school's.

**PB: What made you interested in being a principal or who decided that?**

DS: Well I got a job in Marshall because I had been teaching a certain phonetic system that Marshall was using. There was a vacancy so I was hired to teach that phonetic system and the old north school stood just one block north of the post office. There are four houses on that block now. Your parents might have gone to school there. They tore the old north school to make room for the new north school, which is now available to the students at the north end of town. You probably went there or at the South School. When the north school was opened there was no lunch program so the students were bused to the high school and then bused back. There weren't any gym facilities. The kids played outside on a blacktop area. Teachers were responsible for their own P.E., and their own art classes. They did have a traveling music teacher that came once or twice a week for music. Then when they decided that the old north school needed to be replaced the teachers were distributed out into the different schools. There were some of the elementary classes over at junior high school, there were some at the high school and there were some in the basement of the south school. They also divided the gym down at the south school into classrooms. Everyone had to adjust their teaching styles to go with the place where they were working. I think it was harder on the teachers to be in a room where you could hear the next classroom because there were no ceilings. It was harder on the teachers than the students. The students adjusted pretty quickly to it. By that time we were beginning to have art teachers and P.E. teachers. The teachers when I started teaching, you had to write for a teaching certificate (you had to write on an exam). Back during the war, you could even get a war emergency certificate with very little college credits. Most people in Illinois at that time if you didn't have a four-year degree then you wrote on a teacher's exam and then got your certificate. Then you were expected to get your degree within so many years and that's what a lot of people did. Especially if they didn't have the money to go on to school full time then they would go part time to college until they got their degree. Even though I started teaching in 1947, I didn't get my college degree until 1962. Then Mr. Bush who was superintendent at the time said, Doris we need a woman in administration in Marshall and so he said why don't you go back and get your master's and that is what I did in 1967. Back in the early 1930's and 1940's it was not uncommon to have a woman as an elementary principal, but never would you

had at that time a high school principal that was a woman. But now you know there are women high school principals. You read about them in the Terre Haute paper. In the 1950's and 1960's it was always male administrators. In Clark County this was true too. But this was the beginning of the woman's movement and Mr. Bush was pretty forward thinking and he knew that there would be a time come when women would be wanting into administration. School districts would be frowned upon if they didn't have any woman representatives at the administrative level. That was kind of how I got into administration level and it also appealed to me. I went back and got my master's degree and I took one semester off to finish it up. When I came back to work here in the school district I worked in what you call a curriculum coordinator for five years and it was helping to plan the curriculum through K - 8 grades. We would work on textbook adoption, supplementary materials for teachers, learning kits for the teachers to check out to have in their classrooms, and that kind of thing. I also did the standardized testing in the elementary school. About 1972 there was an opening in the junior high. The principal out there was being moved out. Mr. Bush said Doris you helped plan the curriculum out there now go out there and run it and see that it gets done. So I was assigned to the junior high, scared to death though. There was a good staff there though but they'd had two pretty rough years with things going wrong so they were ready to work with someone new that knew how to deal with students. Mr. Carroll Bennett said to me that they are sending you to the death house. But I didn't get killed because of the wonderful staff. It was really amazing to look up at George Maurer who was 6 foot 3 inches tall as an eighth grader and tell him to do something when I was only 5 foot 3 inches. It took a lot of backbone and grit.

**PB: How long were you the principal of the junior high?**

DS: For thirteen years. I retired in 1985. I retired with thirty-five years of teaching experience. I was younger than most retirees. But I quit because I felt the community still felt I was doing a good job and I wanted to quit while they still felt I was doing a good job. But, the next fall I was really angry with myself for quitting because I wasn't ready to stay home and I missed it and the teachers.

**SS: Did you enjoy being principal?**

DS: I liked it because I liked organization and I think I liked being in charge of something. I think it becomes part of your identity. Once that is gone, I still call myself a teacher but I am no longer a teacher. I lost half of my life when I gave that up just as when you leave high school you will have lost part of your identity. You will no longer be a high school student then you'll be gone and maybe be a college student. Someday you will no longer be a student and it makes a difference in your life. It takes a big chunk out and you have to have things to fill that chunk up again.

**KN: Did you teach second grade?**

DS: I taught second grade at the north school, which I told you just, located north of the high school. It was a big brick building. Your dad, David Nash was in my class. I am not sure about his brother, Steve though. I think I probably had both of the boys. But I sure remember David because his grandmother Sylvia came to visit during American Education Week and she couldn't see anyone in that room except David Nash. There wasn't another kid in there even though there were probably at least thirty other kids. But it was so cute to watch her when she came to visit. Thirty kids at the time of when all of the country schools were being moved into the town schools our enrollment was just bursting at the seams. The first year I taught in Marshall I had 42 students. The woman upstairs teaching fifth grade had 50 students. That is wall to wall desk and chairs and I look at those kids and I wonder how they could be so successful as what they are now. There wasn't any time for individual attention.

**PB: Do you remember any major world events that happened while you were a teacher or principal.**

DS: Well of course I remember the day John F. Kennedy was shot. It is on the same day as my daughter's birthday so it is easy to remember. I was high school student during World War II.

**SS: What were the differences between high schools from then to now?**

DS: Most high schools were smaller than the ones of today. There wasn't as much variety in classes as there is now, there wasn't any girl sports. The girls had P.E. and GAA (Girl's Athletic Association ) which met after school. My daughter was a part of the GAA but I never was. When you think of the education in Marshall you have to remember it was one of the most forward moving school districts in the state. We were among the first to have all day every other day kindergarten, which was unheard of. We were among the first to have a special education program, and an IRO work program. Mr. Bush knew these advances were coming and he was prepared for them.

**SS: Do you know anything about the Ohio Building?**

DS: The Ohio building was called the Ohio Building because it used to be owned by the Ohio Oil Company and they had their main offices here in Marshall. When they left Marshall, they donated the building to the school district. It was used for kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades until the new north school was built and the additions to the south school were finished. After that the central administrative offices were moved to the Ohio Building prior to being at Dr. George Mitchell's family home across from the south school. Presently that would be located at the Graystoke Apartments.