

**Interview with Margaret Doyle**  
**Interviewed by Susan Hawes**  
**Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project**  
**Interviewed on August 16, 1979**

Transcribed and edited by Andrew Erdman and Grace Lahneman, ANTH 440, University of Maryland, October 2005

**Susan Hawes (SH):** Today is the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1979. We're at 730 Temple Crest Road. Mrs. Doyle, you first started teaching seventh grade at Robert Poole in 1960. Did you have any reason to feel that Pool got less supplies or in any way got the short end of the stick compared to other schools that you were familiar with?

**MD:** No not really. I know that the supplies were short. For example I taught geography and had literally no textbook at all. I made a lot of big material decisions used and those days you could get road maps for free in the gas stations. I'd have several roadmaps built on but um I think that was not so much an unusual condition it seemed in those days that the end of what you got materials with would be a brand new school. You just made do with what you had. Now was my impressions toward those of us as a beginning teacher I uh was observed by central office people and then they talked to people have been in other schools and in other counties and I found that was pretty much the general, except for a new school opening up.

**SH:** You said that Robert Poole had some physical problems because of its age?

**MD:** Yes, Robert Poole was not designed for the use that was made of it. It was a small school and then wings were added to it, which made and makes a very interesting. It's noisy it has many different levels and stairways and it is very difficult to move the children through the halls.

**SH:** You thought that there might be some factors in the community that would compete would, would contribute to the fact that they didn't have modern facilities of supplies.

**MD:** No I don't think so. I think most of the supplies that came into the schools came at the result of federal funding. Made easy schools that were target schools.

**SH:** Were there cases of community pressure to help get things to students?

**MD:** Well yes I think that when the community got together and insisted on a wing for the cafeteria. We had been using a relocate able building, which I thought was awfully a mistake, hundreds of children using it. I think most city schools at the time started just suffered from lack of money and this is the returned formed the location. And all intended to send Dr. Fisherman down to the schools, which is cynical, but its true.

**SH:** In your seventh grade class when you first started um what did you find out or guess about your students background? What kind of characteristics did you notice?

**MD:** Well of course they were all white. Most of the names were English or Irish. We had a few Greek students but predominantly they were the English and Irish decent. And then if you taught a child one year, a few years later you would come to a cousin or younger brother or sister. Then the more experienced teachers would say, oh yes I taught the Bolder brothers. And the fact that later on as I read some end publications in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and 75<sup>th</sup>. The names were the same then as the children each tried.

**SH:** Was there any influence from the south or what is called the Appalachian area would you assume back then. But there that would tend to make you think that the parents were from influence.

**MD:** Not to any great extent. Two years ago I took a course about how to teach English to black children. And it was just a few little things that possible could be or southern derivation rather than local.

**SH:** What were they? Speech?

**MD:** Speech patterns. But they were very minor. Most of the children did not reflect at least in their speech any kind of southern drawl. There were a few things strange to me and I'll mention not because I understand them but because I'm serious about them. One of the first weeks in school I'd been given the job of putting up a bulletin board over the building in one of the hallways. And I had some kids helping me. Oh it was the night before school started. Because some kids had volunteered to come in on their free time. And they said Mrs. Doyle would it be ok, would it be ok if we had some sodas in our pocket book? And to me soda meant the carbonated water and the chocolate syrup and the ice cream. I was startled because these girls were saying they had soda in their pocketbooks. And what they meant is something I would have called a soft drink. And it seemed to me that was one of the few speech patterns that startled me.

**SH:** Was there anything else you can think of?

**MD:** No, I think that was just one of the few little phrases. I might think of something a little later that was anything that I thought was strange.

**SH:** What was the attitude of your kids when, when you first started towards being in school towards having those schools?

**MD:** Well those that came were pretty cheerful about being there. Even some of the ones who really didn't like school and weren't interested would come very regularly, simply to be with their friends. We had quite a bit of absenteeism and quite a bit or unexcused absenteeism or truancy. But for the most part when they came to school the majority of the kids were may be not enthusiastic about schoolwork, but they were very well behaved. And within a class you might have one or two class clowns or people who night require just a little extra discipline or encouragement. And they you would have a few that would be really enthusiastic but they were pretty well behaved. And in the whole they were pretty well behaved. To the point where you

could spot the ones that were acting up. And you could were able to cope with them. You might not keep them from acting up later on, but at least they stood out from the rest of the kids who were following directions.

**SH:** What was your attitude towards the whole process of education and the whole idea of getting an education?

**MD:** Many of them who were not particularly enthusiastic about it, but they would cooperate with you. They would have favorites, as far as the teachers were concerned. They, they might more that willing to do anything risk accept possibility homework or work. But if you needed somebody to clean the boards or somebody to do something connected with school they would find.

**SH:** So you're attitude towards the teachers was a convenience then? And not exactly reverence?

**MD:** No not reverence because they, because they would try out a new teacher, and try out the substitute. But once you past your first or second year and were accepted as a teacher they were, they were willing to work and they would always have a handful of real enthusiastic students.

**SH:** Do you have any sense of what their I uh to the best of themselves was and a whole which?

**MD:** They had a certain code of conduct. And they pretty much tried to live up to their own code. They had a great deal of crime and a great deal of interest in their own neighborhood. And they were not particularly interested in any place outside of the neighborhood. They were very interested if you talked to them about Thirty-sixth Street than Fifth Avenue or any of the other famous streets. They were more interested in somebody who lived in Hampden than somebody who lived in ancient Egypt. They weren't interested in learning for learning's sake. You had to um get them interested.

**SH:** Would they be more interested in something happened as Roosevelt recs? As is happened in the stadium?

**MD:** No because baseball and sports, they would be more interested in something that happened in Roosevelt recs than something that happened in the White House.

**SH:** Well they were interested in Hampden than the rest of Baltimore?

**MD:** Oh yes, definitely. I can remember stories of the elementary school teachers telling me, when I first went there. That they had begun taking the children, the elementary school children on field trips downtown. And they had not been out of the neighborhood before. And I'm talking about young children. And I remember that one of the teachers said that when they came back from one of the downtown department stores and other places downtown, the children, the thing that had impressed them the most was that they had seen a store that had extra lighters. They had never been or seen an extra lighter. And that was their big thrill in downtown Baltimore.

**SH:** How many kids at that time ever went on to high school or went on to college? How often did that happen?

**MD:** Well that would be hard for me to say. Now we're talking about when I first started. That would be in the 60s. So 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> it would have been six or seven years before I would have known anyone's that I taught that graduated from high school. But I think it would have been very rare. The first one I remember would be a boy. There seem to be more boys that finished high school. And then eventually, the girls would have caught up with them. I sort of kept count of them and you know it was like the fingers on one hand for a number of years. Those kids that actually, a lot of them would start high school, but then by about thanksgiving time you'd see them back on the street or they'd come back to visit you. And then by about Christmas time they had pretty well dropped out or stopped coming.

**SH:** Would you say the girls start, started high school too as much as the boys?

**MD:** Well I think they went through the, the routine, but very few of them finished high school in comparison with the boys.

**SH:** What do you think that these kids expected from themselves?

**MD:** Most of them expected to continue to live in the neighborhood and continue to work in the neighborhood. They didn't have to many kids who had a definite idea of what they wanted to do. You didn't have anyone that said, I want to be a secretary or I want to be a nurse or I want to be an auto mechanic or anything of the sort. Most of them expected to get a job in the neighborhood, or work where boys would expect to work, at the station with their father or work wherever the father worked.

**SH:** Did they usually have after-school jobs? When they were in your class? What kinds of jobs would they be?

**MD:** Most of the boys carried newspapers or had a newspaper route or sold newspapers. In those days they would have stands on 36th street and other mid sections every couple blocks, and you could also see them there. Over the years I've seen them selling flowers at sidewalks and intersections not just in Hampden but I've seen them in other places. Even as far as here. Just a few years ago they would work in grocery stores, either bagging, not as clerks not using cash registers but bagging or stacking shelves. Then it seemed to me that all of a sudden that every girl wanted to be a cosmetologist. The word founds around and even some of the boys. Word got around that was good money.

**SH:** When was that? What you were saying.

**MD:** Late 60's and at that point the idea of every kid, no matter how talented that child was to get to Mervo. Mervo represented what MIT would represent in the professions. Girls wanted to study cosmetology, the boys wanted to go to Mervo for the auto mechanics. And a few of them I think the very well went to Mervo and learned cooking and baking. In those days Mervo had

very high internships. If offered an academic diploma as well as certification in various trades. So it was not easy to get into Mervo. And most children wanted to go there.

**SH:** Did they, would have gone on after Mervo? I mean would they have gone on?

**MD:** No the idea was to go to Mervo. And then when you got out you got your licenses, license of like video operator, and you immediately went to work.

**SH:** So Mervo was looked on as a way to get a good paying job? Why do you think most students didn't think of going on to high school and getting jobs in the neighborhood?

**MD:** Well I think of it was that Hampden was insulated geographically. You have the Hopkins campus on one side, regional park on the other. It was pretty much a closed community for many years. The older generations had worked in the mill. I think in the 60's this was changing. I don't think that many people were working in the mills. Most of them were working in the stores and the services in Hampden. They did what was most familiar to them. They would look in the area right around them.

**SH:** Do you think after working at the elementary school and the junior high area both in Hampden?

**MD:** Yes I think that was part of it too. I think that a child started in kindergarten and went to the same building all through elementary school and junior high and I think that would explain some of the dropout rate in high school. I was just too much of a shock to suddenly be put in a situation where the child was not known to the building. They were not familiar with people from different, different communities. Certainly by the time a child got used to elementary school. From elementary school, we might have had a pretty good idea of who that child was, and certainly the child knew the names of every junior high teacher. It was just very easy for them. Then suddenly he was asked to take a bus or ride a street car to some where else. And it was all new and strange for them. It was difficult.

**SH:** Do you think that kind of situation is any different from people on Mount Ville Julia or ones in Highlandtown?

**MD:** Well I imagine it would be very similar. But not having taught there it would be a guess. I'm wondering though in case of the little league about so many people coming into the neighborhood. You might have a degree of sophistication there because Hampden stayed to itself and I don't think there were people coming into Hampden for any particular reason.

**SH:** What did you notice about the parents? First of all I wonder if you knew where a lot of the parents did work? You said, you didn't think they worked in the mill.

**MD:** Because I was teaching geography, it just seemed logical to me that if a kid wanted to make a map they would make a street map of students he was familiar with. And again I didn't know that much about the community so I began to do a little community study and then as I found out things about kids. The parents I met and of course I met them in a way different say from the

principle or vice principle, who was calling parents on a disciplinary matter. I met then as a teacher or as a student because I was asking them for information, for help. Most of them were extremely cooperative many cases they would be upset if I had to call a parent and talk to them about something the child was doing and not doing. They might say well that's what they told me in elementary school. But most of them particularly if you approached them with the idea that we wanted to help the child would be cooperative. Certainly as I walked around the neighborhood I would knock on doors or just go up to people on the street or introduce myself, maybe someone had given me a name or something of someone. Once they found out I was not from the government that I was from the school they were very helpful. Um they didn't much care, and I got the impression they wanted as little to do with the federal government or any government as possible. As long as I wasn't there investigating something or taxing assessing taxes or something then they would be most helpful.

**SH:** What was your impression about their attitude towards what their kids should be learning and what they expected for their kids?

**MD:** I think most of them wanted the kids to be in school and wanted the kids to have homework and wanted the kids to behave reasonably. They might not project them staying in school through high school and college. But while they were in junior high they certainly wanted them to behave themselves and learn something. They were very concerned about homework, very concerned about having books to bring home. Many of them would go to great trouble to see their kids came to school. They would call me once a week. We would often have requests, could you call any time he was absent. Of course we couldn't handle. We didn't have the telephone facilities or the time to do that. But we'd say if you want to call after 10 o'clock on Friday. By that time all the books are down and you can check the week. Very seldom did I have any hassle with parents. Sometimes if they thought the child was right they were, it wasn't that they were awed by the teacher or anything, they sort of pick up the child was right.

**SH:** What, you'd mentioned that one of the reasons for not continuing with their education might be financial need? Was that an impression you got from the parents?

**MD:** Yeah, from them and I guess from the kids. The kids were of course very anxious to get out of and get to work. When I first started to teach not to many people, in fact I can remember the older people saying, it was very rare for people to even have cars. Most of them could walk to work. Later on some commented on how everyone seemed to be, would have cars. Now the boys of course wanted to have cars. I think the girls wanted the clothes and what not. They, they wanted a job immediately. They would be very impressed with the salaries, which was a lot of money to a youngster, but really wasn't enough to raise a family or to live comfortably later on. Most of them were very anxious to get out and earn money immediately. Then we worked with some of the kids. Many of them had never been on a college campus before. One of the things we did, we have a future teachers of America for any child that was possibly interested as teaching for a career. I think some of the things we did there worked well.

**Mrs. Doyle:** We would take them to Copin State college and that was the first time they'd been on a college campus, and looked around. They were very impressed, how expensive it would be. But it wasn't that college costs so much it was that they were in school. The fact that most of

their friends were working at the same kind of job they would get. They didn't have friends who had become their or who were secretaries. Most of their friends were working as clerks or in gas stations.

**SH:** Did any have work in the mills? That you know of.

**MD:** I seriously doubt it. I wanted very much to take some class into the mill. I inquired and was told at the London Fog that it was against all safety regulations to have any one younger than 16 present for any reason in the mill. So I'm sure that they did not find jobs in the mill.

**SH:** Do you know where the teachers were from?

**MD:** There was a cross section. We had a number of black teachers, three that had been there for some time before I joined. We had a few Jewish teachers. One of the black teachers commuted from Washington. The rest of them, the rest of the staff lived in Baltimore City or near by.

**SH:** Were there any in Hampden? Any from Hampden?

**MD:** There was one. Not really 1960, I think she joined the staff a year or so later, Nancy Sikes. And then we had Trudy Devell and then Swinch.

**SH:** When the teachers had to switch did they think seriously, did they have any prejudices about the kids in Hampden, part relocation.

**MD:** No I think that the only prejudices came from. I'm just trying to think about where the teachers came from. Shortly after I got there, I knew Baltimore City was doing some recruiting for teachers in the Midwest. But I think most of them had been raised in Baltimore City. The teachers attitude, first of all I don't think you can teach for very long if you don't like the kids. Now I'm sure that there are people who are going through maybe difficulties, personal difficulties. But I don't think you could stand to teach in fact I know you couldn't if you didn't have some warmth, some interest in the children. And I think most of the attitudes were pretty to the point that I can remember occasionally noticing because it was so rare, a teacher who's attitude was not polite.

**SH:** Do you think substitute teachers or yourself?

**MD:** I think that to be a teacher, you had to be optimistic and know that in the past this didn't go on with other teachers. Trying to get us to change more. The better teachers tried to give them as much as they could. In the short time knowing that this would be terminal. And the terminal education therefore, I think we were disappointed when we had a child that had the ability but then didn't use it. But if you know they don't go on to further studies you know that the children they laid are going to be one step ahead.

**SH:** Were there any old time teachers who had been there for a while when you came, would you call any of their comments about the school earlier in work? What they used to be like?

**MD:** No, there were a number of teachers there that had been there 20, 30 years. One of them was Karen Wills, who had begun and finished there. She originally taught Latin. Speaking of relevant curriculum, she had taught Mathew there. One of the elementary school teachers retired just recently. I was really amazed by other people and I've given you names of other people I think you ought to talk to. They were mostly in the elementary school. As far as I can think of I didn't know anybody that has been there a spectacularly long time.

**SH:** Is there anything off hand that you recall or anything sort of striking about the school?

**MD:** Maybe one of the things about the school would be that it didn't change. You had the same names, you had the same families sending children. There was stability so that there was no stress in change. We didn't begin to hit changes until the late 60's. Yes I remember the elementary school. Children records would have spaces on them for changes of address. Very often there would be three, four, even more changes of address, in the packets. There were also codes that were used. One letter of the alphabet represented a move to another county. Another represented a move to another school district in Baltimore City. I remember one of the elementary school teachers saying to me, ya know were being now to use codes we have to looks up. We've never used them before. Which represented a move outside of Hampden or move to the county.

**SH:** You thought that was about when? Sometime in the 60's right?

**MD:** Yeah, yeah I imagine the late 60's

**SH:** You also mention something interesting about the religious background of your children.

**MD:** Yes, very often you'd have a note come in from a parent, could so in so please be excused from homework on, usually a Wednesday night, either to attend a church service or to sing in a choir. Some of the kids I remember one girl played the organ I believe. But they would go to church not only on Sunday mornings but also evening services. It was my impression, people had told me that this was a great place for the village tug of the Bible meeting. I think Billy Sunday, someone told me he had actually come to Hampden. But for some time get used to writing, to get their thoughts moving. We'd have kind of a free-wheeling profession where the children would have one minute to write as much as they could on either a topic they picked or a topic that I would pick. I would tell them, you know, get started write on your topic if you run out of ideas just repeat yourself until the clock starts running again. They liked it. It helped them get their self together and, and loosening up their, limbering up their thought processes and for good writing. But every once in a while the kids would be writing on a topic and then they would go into trying of speech pattern that would be used in sermon. It would be very interesting to read and then realize what he was doing, which was reproducing the speech that a preacher had used.

**SH:** How important did you think athletics was to the kids?



**MD:** When I first started to teach every boys dream was to play on a major league baseball team. That was one way of really getting ahead. Anything that would have to do with softball or baseball just fascinated the kids. The houses would always be decorated for the start of the season. If the Orioles had a successful year and the year they won the pennant in the early 50's. All kinds of banner and what not would be out. Most of the boys would dream of making the major leagues. In fact there had been a very famous baseball player Frank Foreman. Do you know the story? This was many years ago. With the son of a man that agreed to, what I read was originally hired and brought to Hampden to run the first steam engine. He had worked on the riverboats, steamboats and remained in the stream room into the factory. He was brought up in as the expert and it was his son Frank that was the famous baseball player.

**SH:** I wonder if there was anything else. But I wonder if there were other things that you thought they were particularly good at drama or any kind of activity that you could count on?

**MD:** Some schools have the tradition of music and drama. Robert Poole wasn't one of them. Now what the kids were interested in was the marching band. Many of them belong to the local place and drums. The girls in particular were much interested in baton twirling. They would take lessons and practice. Each spring time we would put on a faculty show. All the teacher would get together and we would write a script. In fact we would write the script right up until the show was going on cause we'd still be doing changes. The teachers would act out these parts. And write the script in such a way that could involve any of the children, who could sing or play the piano or any musical instrument. We always had to provide for the baton twirlers. One of the scripts had to do with going to the moon, another was a take off on I think it was a television show. And one had to do with the Three Musketeers.

**SH:** Were there any traditions in the school that you felt were problem ground from a long way back?

**MD:** Well we had an assembly. It seemed to me either every Friday or every other Friday. The boys were required to wear a shirt and tie and either a sweater or jacket. Now to provide a suit or jacket for a boy in 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, grade I think its very expensive because the boys went without it, but showed up with some kind of jackets on, suit coats or jackets or nice looking sweater. And they would have a necktie. Then the homeroom teachers would keep a supply of neckties. You'd go around and you find all the neckties from any man you found that would be given for Christmas and that he wouldn't wear. Hand printed, loud, neck ties or with strange garnish colors. You'd always have a supply of neckties. On Friday morning there'd always be some boys frantically going around to the various homerooms, do you have a necktie? Then when the styles change and the wider ties, the flashier ties, I mean those guys were collector's items. They had a hard time getting back into school. Later on during the day if there was a girl that a boy liked a she could usually be seen with a neckties just draped around her neck. Oh and in those days if you wanted to really show how tough you were the boys would unbutton the top collar. And wait for some teacher to glance.

**SH:** What would they do when the teacher glancing said something?

**MD:** They would button it. But when you draw the line here then the kid will defy you by just stepping over it. But when you don't draw it you have to do something much worse to defy you.

**SH:** You said when you were talking about fighting that, that it became payment during the integration period. But your, you were saying that you thought it was sort of the culture prior to the segregation.

**MD:** The boys from Hampden would fight the boys from Woodberry. Or they'd fight the boys from Talmayco. Or one girl would fight another girl if she felt the girl had stolen her boyfriend. The scraping and fighting was part of the code. Just as part of the code was that you didn't say anything about another boy's sister or mother. I can remember one horrible story when a girl came into an all boys home room with a message and somebody made a remark about her, probably complimentary, it turns out she was the sister of one of the boys in the home room and, and that wasn't allowed. So there was a fight about that. We'll meet you behind the rec. Which as I understand it was the meeting place for those, just like dueling. Sun down at the Washington Monument. It, it was an old fashion code, which I had noticed as maybe as part of the southern inheritance, that is was a rather chivalrous and a rather

**MD:** At that time, I don't know.

**SH:** Would you describe the beginning with the federal compliance at the beginning of integration? Could you give some examples of how that progressed in the school?

**MD:** Well yes, we had to very lovely young ladies who were very bright. I think that most of people and teachers were so anxious not to hurt their feelings and you didn't know to be tactful."

**SH:** "This was at the beginning of-

**MD:** Integration. Baltimore city complied with it instantly to the fullest degree. Later we had a few more students. I don't think integration was really big thing for the students until a real big number came in. But it seemed in the school itself that everything went along smoothly. The kids seemed to get along well and I don't believe that you heard any kind of racial slurs or bickering. Now the friendships did not keep up after school but in the classroom there was respect and mutual curiosity.

**SH:** What was the parent's reaction to the integration?

**MD:** Well, in the beginning we weren't aware of any because it went rather smoothly. We had started Future Teachers of American and I think at that point we had kids who were thinking of possibly becoming teachers. There was a convention and the kids wanted to go and the fathers of the one of the girls could possible be able to drive us. She came in the next day and said my father is going to be off the day and take us over and take up back. I thought oh my goodness, he must have been thinking all white, no blacks and at least two of the girls were Negroes. And what's the parents the reaction going to be and so as tactfully I told him how many girls and I mentioned two were Negroes and he said 'ok! No problem!' So at that point there wasn't a problem. We always had election for student counsel and we had some elections for vice president and president and a Negro came in second. Some of us were furious enough at this to

actually go back and look and the ballots. At this point I think the students were 15% Negro and they could have voted in the block because they had earned the vote.

**SH:** What point did you notice the kids and parents were upset.

**MD:** Its hard to put a date on because as I would imagine as more and more kids came to school and I'd think id be hard to put a date on it-

**SH:** I think it was 1966 when Baltimore City had to completely comply-

**MD:** Yeah, I think there were troubles before that, I would say in those general years with Kennedy and Dr. King. So probably then and just after would be the more tension in the school.

**SH:** Um, I suppose that it was about 76' when you hear about it. How did the kids deal with the riots?

**MD:** You are talking about 76? I think that the number of kids, not more, played hooky in the beginning and then they gradually came back to school. They were gradually more outspoken. I think it's interesting because you have them doing things together, conversations with whites and blacks. You would have these mock insults like you were talking to family members. I think this is a result by having the black people the masters of the put downs. They'd get mad when they'd insult each other. I think you saw that a bit more than before because before they were super cautious of each other. I think that's a good sign because they are getting comfortable with each other but you do see more graffiti on the walls and slurs. But as I say I think and I hope I'm right the time of the most threats was before 76. I think now it was more accepting and a little more understanding but it was still a really tense time for the school.

**SH:** Mhmm, what were the reactions of the tension, of the threatening actions?

**MD:** Well when I deal with parents in a constructive way where the principle that deals with the decline would have to deal with the parents whose kids were in the fight would have completely different outlook on the situation. I think a lot of the hostility, I think that people who were hostile had either been minority of the blacks, have become more resigned more accepting.

**SH:** How would these parent's actions construct against the school?

**MD:** For example, in 76 I think people were extremely apprehensive I think many parents and friends of the school got together and formed committees. I knew they were outside lining the streets as the black students walked to school.

**SH:** Was there a change in the teachers at that point?

**MD:** Yes there were a number of new teachers who were new. But then as the years went by we had more black teachers over the years but it seemed that it got harder to keep adjusting and accepting new people everyone. But everyone went out of their way to be friendly because we had reservations that the faculty wouldn't talk to each other and we did that unconsciously but

when you had 10 pr 12 that is awfully hard to ignore. Sometimes you never saw the new teachers' because it was such as big school. Many years, the junior high teachers would sit at one end of the table and the elementary teachers at the other and there was no clear conversation between the two which I thought was silly because they were interesting people. One of the changes was the increasing of the male teachers in the elementary school. When I first joined there were 3 male teachers; one was the gym teacher one was the shop teacher and the last was a political science teacher. The rest of us were women! Eventually we got more men for the elementary faculty. We got some attractive young males and the girls liked them but we had black teachers on the faculty and we got along well with them. We would have a George Washington birthday party and we would get together and just have fun, haha. And we just included each other. Then we had shifts which means that half the staff would come in the morning and half in the afternoon and it was hard to get together like this. When other new people came in they just added to the problem and sometimes they didn't want to be there.

**SH:** Before you were talking about how not many kids went on to high school-

**MD:** And now more are-

**SH:** So what do you think is causing this?

**MD:** Part of this probably came about from the joining of the war.

**SH:** And how did the war affect high school?

**MD:** Well one way that a boy got out of the war, was a college education. Some of them went into the army just for the 3 meals a day, the exercise so they actually joined the war. Many of them went into the army and came out with um, skills that catered to their interests. It seemed pretty good in a peace time. It allowed them to travel and I notice now that many of them came back and married girls not from Hamden.

**SH:** Do you think that the school had enough diverse classes?

**MD:** Well that's been a recurring problem since I've been there. Do you we put in certain special courses? Training? But because we are a small school we have a small classes and a small enrollment we don't have enough supplies and teachers to teach specialized courses. And secondly it would be hard to get that many students interested.

**SH:** If it occurred what kind of electives would the school offer?

**MD:** The kids, especially the boys, are very interested in cars, the girls in a cosmetology course but now we cant do that because we have shop for boys and girls. The problem if you do that very early and if you train them too early for a special job then they don't have a guarantee that they will get that job. So you can't start a child that early in education. You need a right balance, read the newspaper, provide them with newspaper. Over the years we've had a few days where the kids choose a class such as home-eck, or nature survival skills like in the woods

and camping. But with the lack of money and small class and small student body it's almost impossible to offer outside classes.

**SH:** Earlier you said a number of students would repeat seventh grade up to three times? Does that happen often in Hamden?

**MD:** No maybe sometimes but it seems in Baltimore City they stopped that from happening. That could happen when a student would transferred into Hamden because they might be at a different level than the rest of the kids but then Hamden changed and would just automatically put them in straight into eighth grade. This had a bad effect on the school system. It would certainly rush some students who weren't ready for a grade.

**SH:** Did your school have an, well not so much an intelligence level test, but an aptitude test?

**MD:** It would be extremely difficult because most kids did not take those tests seriously. It was a long boring leisurely time with numbered problems, long problems and I can remember one year we said take this test! One year a couple years back and all the boys didn't do well on the test and when we asked them they said we didn't know they count. I know over the years, things have shaped up and the elementary school has began to prepare the students for the tests. Most of them can't handle a textbook or find sections hard but some are patient and try it. Even the teachers a while back didn't have to take tests on their level or their teaching skills which shocked me! Now they are though.

**SH:** Looking at some of the other neighborhoods, Hamden is one of the lowest neighborhoods, for whatever reason, in graduation rates and high school graduation rates. Why is that?

**MD:** Well I think we already covered that. I think it's because they stay in Hamden and get comfortable and then when they need to go to high school its new and they can't adjust. Secondly, they kids only met those in Hamden and people who work in Hamden. They want to leave as soon as possible to get money and paying jobs. The fact that all their friends and neighbors are living comfortable, happy lives and don't know people who work at high paying jobs so maybe they don't need high paying professions. We need to teach kids, they are unaware what goes on outside of Hamden, or that they can't imagine a life outside of Hamden.

**SH:** One thing we haven't talked about that I would like to talk about is the children's reading levels and their daily schedule.

**MD:** The school children as a rule were not great readers. Sometimes their would be a love of reading, like one student brought home a book I gave him and then the next day would bring it back in 5 or 6 weeks. They just weren't interested in reading, not like um music or clothes. Also, back then, you can't now, but if the student had permission from their parents they could go home for lunch. Otherwise, the students could sit outside for 25 minutes for lunch, play basketball. Then you would call them in and lunch was over. One day, a bunch of students went home for lunch and came back and came up to me and said, 'the presidents been shot!' Now I said are you sick? Because you know this is what started the jokes, and he 'said no, I'm serious! Now I said, 'this is not funny, are you sure?' He said yes. So I went in and told him to sit down

and not tell anyone. And then I went into the school building and told the teachers and we went into the home-ec building where they had televisions and he was right, Kennedy had been shot. It was the strangest thing to me, thinking back I remember everyone was shot. The principle was Mr. Smith, he told everyone on the PA and of course my class didn't do any work because we all were shocked. I said, if you can think of anything to do to take your mind or to calm yourself do it. So we tried but it was a very strange feeling because it's something that's not associated with politics like what we taught in class. Then from time to time Mr. Smith would come into our class that day and reassure us and tell us we should all be thankful that we're still alive. It seemed to me that we got out of school but I don't remember when exactly I realized that Kennedy had been shot, but I will never forget how I felt when I learned that Kennedy had been shot.

END OF TAPE