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## Interview no. 616

Bulah Liles Patterson

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Bulah Liles Patterson

INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Craver

PROJECT: History of U.T. El Paso

DATE OF INTERVIEW: October 27, 1983

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

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TRANSCRIBER: Elvira Chavarria

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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Former Math professor at the College of Mines, 1927 to the 1967.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

How she came to teach at the College of Mines in 1927; personalities, social life, and activities from the 1920s through the 1950s.

Length of Interview: 1 1/2 hours Length of Transcript: 30 pages

Interview with Bulah Liles Patterson on October 27, 1983. Interviewer is Rebecca Craver.

C: Now I want to start out and ask you what year, Mrs. Patterson, did you start teaching at UTEP?

P: The fall of '27. It was then the College of Mines and Metallurgy.

C: Why did you come to the School of Mines?

P: I had graduated at the University of Chicago and had wanted a college teaching position in Texas, and I had not received it so I started teaching in a Dallas high school--Forest Avenue. And the week before Thanksgiving, I had a call from Miss Dozier of the Teachers Appointment Committee at the University of Texas where I was registered. She said that the College of Mines and Metallurgy needed a math teacher. The College had grown suddenly due to the fact that El Paso Junior College, which was located on the third floor of El Paso High School, had not opened due to lack of funds. And they had an enrollment over double what they had had and wanted a teacher, a math teacher. So she asked me if I could come and I said "Yes." Did I want to come? I said, "Yes," if I could get released from my position. So, I went to my principal first and he said that he would approve 'cause that was something I wanted to do and it was a good opportunity to get started teaching in college. And Saturday morning I went down to the Head Office and they released me. So I got ready right quick and came out here, and by the way I didn't have enough money to get out here so I called my mother and told her to call the bank and tell 'em I was giving a check on them and to let it go through. So, I got my money on a Saturday and then on Sunday afternoon, I took a train and came out here. And I landed here Monday. And I had met a conductor on the train who said he had a

sister that lived near downtown and that maybe I would like to go to her house until I could get out to the college. There was no transportation out there then. Got out there the next day and talked to Mr. Puckett who had come in from El Paso Junior College as a dean of the school. He said I could start Monday. And I don't remember the date but I started the Monday after Thanksgiving in 1927. And at that time there were only two women teachers out there, Mary Quinn Kelley and Anita Lorenz, and they are both living, by the way. May Quinn's living here and Anita's living up in Las Cruces in Good Samaritan retirement home.

C: What did she teach?

P: Uh, she taught Spanish and Mary taught social studies, history and government and sociology and those subjects. The College of Mines itself had had a number of students from México and of course many of the graduates were going to Mexico because, you see, it wasn't just an engineering school. It was a school of mines and metallurgy, and opportunities for jobs were in México, so Spanish was important for them. At that time we had classes six days a week. They were three hour classes for each subject per week, so we had three classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and three classes Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. And I had five classes which made fifteen hours teaching a week, which every faculty member had at that time; and I walked into those classes, and the vast majority of the students were boys, or men. It was a match class, you see, and they were men. Now, I had a few girls because they had come over from the Junior College, too, but not very many; most of them were men, boys. And so that was the beginning of my teaching. Some of the teachers from the Junior College were

already all over. They came over in the fall semester, but there weren't any women that came over, and then in the next year a number of women from the Junior College came over.

C: Do you remember what your first impressions of the campus were?

P: Well, I wasn't very much surprised, and I wasn't disturbed like my mother. She was very much disturbed when I found out, when she found out, that I was coming to El Paso. A bunch of Mexicans and drunken cowboys--that was her idea of El Paso! Well, I wasn't that much surprised about it, and I wasn't really too surprised at the campus because I realized it had been a very small school but had the prospects of growing, which of course it did, very rapidly. And there weren't any paved walks; there wasn't a paved street out there on that hill. It was all rock. I lived with a secretary to Mr. Puckett for about a week or two, and then I got this apartment. And I lived at what they called the Patterson Apartments, no relation to me at all. And we walked, I walked, across the mountains. I didn't have a car. I walked across from North Mesa, just across the mountains up there, and there was just a little trail about like that, two feet uphill and downhill, and across the mountains. And the buildings were a surprise in a way then. They weren't like it is now; some of them don't look to have any relation to that old architecture. But then, the only buildings that were there, and I mean there were four buildings and then a little, what they called a mill or something that had to do with the metallurgy. It was way down there, under the hill, where old Seamon Hall is now, and they called that the Mill. And it was frame, or something like that. It wasn't stone or masonry of any kind. And, math classes were in the Main Building and so was the Registrar's Office; and in the basement

was a bookstore and they sold sandwiches and things like that. Well, I don't believe they had that even that first year or two.

C: Well, who else taught math?

P: Well, Dean Kidd.

C: Tell me about him.

P: Well, he was a very outstanding character and sort of objected to me.

C: Why?

P: /Imitating Dean Kidd/ "I'm not going to have women teaching my engineers!"

(Laughter) But you know I wasn't there very long until he was very glad to get my students because I soon had a reputation of being rather "hard-boiled," 'cause I worked very hard myself and I expected my students to do likewise. I graded home papers and it was really quite a job. You think about how many students you have turning in a paper--I had three classes a day, that was a hundred and twenty papers a day--and I worked almost day and night to keep up with them because I didn't know how else to teach. I had come from high schools. In Dallas I had no class bigger than thirty, and forty made quite a bit of difference, you know. I don't think I had any help at all the first few years of grading papers. I had office hours and my students I made feel that they were privileged to come to me any time. If they got a bad grade and didn't know what was wrong with it, I was always glad to tell them, "Now, if you will come to me and have your paper corrected the problems weren't right that you missed, I'll raise your grade five or ten points." So, then, about other teachers in math. There was a man teaching Math, but he wasn't a teacher. I had taught in high school, and regardless of what some people think, teaching is just like any other profession. You need to have training in teaching, and I don't

mean formal education courses. I mean you have to have the experience, which I had had in high school. Of course I was accused sometimes of teaching just like high school, but it was the only way that I could put my subject across. And that's the way I always taught. And, let me see, I believe that Lloyd Nelson also had a match class. He did at different times. He was in Geology but he had match classes at some times.

C: Well, how would you compare the students, say, in 1928 and '29, with the caliber of students in recent years?

P: Well, course I retired in 1967, so I'll have to speak from then.

C: All right.

P: The students then were older and they were very much more serious. And on the whole, they were better students; however, in the latter years, the training on the whole was very much lower. The students were very much poorer, but the outstanding students were more well trained. It wasn't that we didn't have good students in the late '50s and up to the middle '60s when I retired; we did have outstanding students, and they were very, very good. But just the whole caliber level of students was not up to high standards, they didn't work as hard. Now the students in the early days were serious...so many of them were older. It was during the Depression, as you know, and they were scrambling to get some preparation to get a job. It was an economically distressed era and it was dead serious business with them. So, they were more studious and worked hard. But, as far as outstanding caliber, we've had just as good all along.

C: How did the Second World War affect things going on down at the campus?

P: Second World War. Well, of course you know all the boys went away...

were called away. And then we had a group of soldiers come in here, and they weren't interested in the College. A few were sincere and really wanted to work, but not too much.

C: And some of those were in your math classes?

P: Oh, yes, they were supposed to take a definite course and they were in the math classes. And if I remember correctly, they were sort of separated, too. They kind of went by the grouping of the Army. And at that time I had all men. Of course, that had happened before when I first came here, mostly boys, or men.

C: Do you remember when the first girls' dormitory was built?

P: No, I don't. I don't think I remember. You see, this mining school had two dormitories and about two or three classrooms. I think there were five buildings and they had two boys' dormitories because they did draw--even though their student body was small--they drew from outside of El Paso. You see, this school was the only mining school in Texas. I think maybe later on A&M gave some mining courses and maybe the University of Texas. Anyway, they had two dormitories and one of them was Kelly. I believe it was Kelly and Kerbey, but I'm not right sure. It was two buildings up on the hill towards Athletic Field. And at that time they didn't even have what they call Kidd Field.

C: Did you attend the football games?

P: Yes, the first few years I was here I didn't miss any games, but I finally got so I didn't go to any games. But I went to most of the games at first and everybody knew everybody else pretty soon, too, and that made a difference, you know.

C: Did the faculty get together at parties?

P: Yes, we even used to have picnics. We had a faculty picnic every year.



C: Where would they be?

P: Well, at different places, but we used to go up the river here. Up at a place they call The Rocks. I don't know if it's even there now, but we used to go up there for our picnics. And we had a few on the campus and I think that was just about it. We'd have it on the campus...I don't remember that we went anywhere else. And then later on, President Barry...he was the first president, you know...used to have teas or something, and entertain in his home.

C: Was his home on campus?

P: No, he lived in a place out on Montana...you know where the Colonial Terrace is? Well, it was one of those residences along there. I think now it's an office building or something. Dean Kidd had a house there on the campus. I think it's been torn down. It was pretty close to the Student Union, just sort of across that street there from the Student Union. The deans lived in that for a good many years. And then they got the Ware House and it was right down there about where the Liberal Arts Building is now. They acquired that, and that was the President's Home. That was the first time a president lived on the campus. A. A. Smith was Acting President for a while. There's been a number of interim presidents, as the records will probably show. They were just temporary, and Smith was one of 'em and he lived on the campus at that time in the Kidd House.

C: Did you go to any of the graduation ceremonies?

P: We all went to the graduations, for years and years and years!

C: Were you told to go?

P: We were told to go! All the faculty members were

expected to go to the graduation. But you realize then the faculty was small, and they wanted to make a big showing. In fact, I had bought my cap and gown at University of Chicago when I graduated. I graduated in June, the latter part of June of '27. I came out here that fall and I brought my cap and gown and it was a good thing because a lot of the faculty members would have to hire them or rent them every year, you know, and that was a nuisance. So, I just gave mine away when I knew I was going to move and it was along about, well, the last graduation I think that all the faculty members were required to go to. It was the first one that they held in Sun Bowl. Then they had just begun to have only the deans and the heads of the departments at graduations.

C: Well, in the early years, when you told me there were just five buildings out there, where were the graduation ceremonies held?

P: On the tennis courts. And then later on, somewhere else. I remember one that was held at the Masonic Hall down there on Santa Fe Street. I remember that one distinctly. And then after, they used a building out there on Kidd Field. I don't know what it's called now. Is it called Kidd Building, Kidd Gymnasium then?

P: Well, anyway, after it was built for a number of years it was big enough to hold the graduation class. But now the class of '33 was on the tennis courts. And every once in a while there'd be a sandstorm or a shower; more likely a sandstorm would come up and ruin the graduation, but on the whole we were pretty lucky. There weren't too many of them that were ruined like that.

C: Did they have any other yearly traditions? Like a Maypole Dance?

P: No, they had a Saint Patrick's Day. See, that was a mining school

and they made the freshmen paint the "M" on the mountain, and then for the initiation of the freshman class, they took them up to Oro Grande and pushed them through the old mines up there. I went up there two or three times.

C: Tell me about it. What would you do up there?

P: Well, they had this old mine up there, and they'd make Freshmen go through it. Some of the places you had to crawl through. They'd go through and of course they didn't do anything to the faculty members or the teachers. But the freshmen, they'd give them a wallop or something as they would go through these narrow places up there in this old mine. And they went up there years and years. Well, they went up there actually until it got so it just sort of died, because the school got so big. I think they stopped them from painting the "Ms" or the letters on the mountain, and so all of that they got away from. And that was a very important day, and of course it is a very important day for Dean Kidd, too. And I remember one day after the holiday, Saint Patrick's Day, they said something in faculty meeting, if that day you took your roll in your classes and you gave cuts. And five was the limit. The sixth one you were out of the course, unless there were real good excuses for it, and those excuses couldn't come in late. You had to get your excuse through the Dean's Office and then you'd be allowed to make up their work. It had to be illness or something like that. They did keep a roll, so the question came up whether they were going to give cuts for Saint Patrick's Day or not. Well, Dean Kidd, of course, thought they ought not to have cuts. I remember distinctly he said, "Anybody that's got gumption enough"...(I don't know if those were his exact words or not)..."to teach ought to know whether he

wants to give a cut or not." But I think most of the teachers just ignored it /the absences on Saint Patrick's Day/. They didn't hold the student responsible for the work that he missed that day either. In some of the classes there wouldn't be but two or three people because if it was a math class or an engineering class, there wouldn't be anybody in class. So, it was just a day that passed by and they ignored it. But that was one of the holidays. You see, even at that time, I'd say eighty percent of the student body was local. Nearly everyone from the Junior College was local, you know. So, when they came over it was a local college, more or less. So, they had their social activities outside. Of course, they had the dances and the faculty members had to take time about chaperoning the dances that the students had. They were chaperoned, too; it wasn't just in name only. In the gymnasium, close to Kidd Field, that's where their dances were.

C: What about the music? What did they have?

P: They usually had a local band. It wasn't many years after that until the Miners had a band and they would play for the dances, too.

C: And you had to chaperone?

P: Teachers, the Dean of Women and the Dean of Men were always expected to be there. I remember Miss Bynam; she came in as Dean of Women, I think about in 1929. At least she was there pretty soon after it grew so suddenly. And she was kind of surprised that they expected her to go to all the dances, but they did. They expected Dean of Women to go to all the dances and then they always had faculty members besides that.

C: Do you remember having to break up any hugging and kissing in the corner or anything like that?

P: Oh, no, I never... I remember one dance they had a little disturbance. I shouldn't tell you this but you can cut it out...one of the boys took a swing at one of the faculty members because the faculty member was half drunk. Knocked him down--he was dancing with this boy's date and he put his hand down the back of her dress. The faculty member didn't retaliate; I think it sobered him up. I was there that night and I didn't know exactly what happened. I was one of the chaperones and I went to see and by that time the faculty member had gone out to the door. Nothing was ever heard about it.

C: Well, this wasn't during Prohibition then, huh?

P: Let me see. I have to think about when Prohibition...I guess it was!

C: You think, then, they got away with drinking on the campus, even during Prohibition?

P: Well, we could go to Juárez, you know.

C: Did a lot of people do that?

P: Yes, a lot of people went to Juárez. Lot of people went to Juárez. I went to Juárez myself, but I didn't go to drink. The food over there was very inexpensive. In my early days in El Paso, you could go over there and get venison and Boquilla bass at very, very reasonable prices. After I married my husband, and I used to go over there almost every weekend until I found a cockroach in my salad and a rat ran over my foot. I would notice that every time I would go over

there and eat I would, oooh, feel squeamish in my stomach. So, after the rat and the cockroach, I said, "Now, I am through going to Juarez." I just can't think that they are very sanitary over there. Of course, people that were drinking didn't pay any attention to a few rats and cockroaches!

C: Well, let's talk some more about these dances. Did they have them every weekend?

P: It seemed to me like it was almost every weekend because I know that was the reason that Miss Bynam and I were very close friends. And she thought that it was a burden for her. She said, "I just don't feel like that's the Dean of Women's job." But, if I remember correctly, she did it until she died. She died about, oh, let me see, I think about '31 or '32.

C: What did she think the job of the Dean of Women should be?

P: Well, she thought that it was dealing with the girls about their problems, whatever they were, and maybe teas or something like that, you know. It seemed to me like they had a dance every Saturday night but I couldn't be sure of that.

C: You mentioned teas?

P: Yes, they had afternoon teas and things like that, you know. And of course after a good many of the girls came, then they started sororities. The sororities got started, and the Dean of Women was always asked to their social functions, of course.

C: Do you remember about what year the sororities began to come on campus?

P: Let me see. I am kinda guessing, but I think it was just about in the mid-'30's that the sororities began to come on campus.

C: Would you go to these teas in the afternoons?

P: Well, yes, I would sometime, but I never did like teas. I know that [President] Barry had them real often. And I hardly ever went. I never liked teas anyway. Stand around, try to balance a cup of tea and a cookie on a plate, and I just didn't care for them.

C: And you had to be all dressed up?

P: Yes, you had to get all dressed up and all and I just never did. I was a hard worker and then the time that I had off, I liked athletics. I rode horseback at that time. The cavalry was out at Fort Bliss, and we could ride horses out there, and I did a lot of riding. I did swimming and I swam down at Cathedral High. They had an indoor pool. They didn't have a pool out on the campus at all, for years and years. And I played tennis and golf and, as I say, I worked pretty hard. I played bridge and of course if I was asked to chaperone at a dance, I did it. I did my duty.

C: Well, they had football and they had tennis and what other sports on campus in the early days?

P: Well, they had basketball teams.

C: Did the girls play basketball?

P: Well, they played, but not in competition. They played basketball and they built them a little gym. There wasn't any women's gym at all. But they built a little rock building with the same kind of architecture. And I guess that has been torn down, they kind of built it down in a canyon over there, somewhere between the Geology Building and the power house. And it was a pretty good gym. They could play basketball, and they played tennis, and they had little baseball games and things like that but nothing intercollegiate. I mean, it was all right there on the campus. They didn't play other schools.

C: During World War II, did any of your male colleagues have to leave to go to the war?

P: Oh, yes.

C: Did you have an increased teaching load then?

P: No, as a matter of fact, I was out a year or two because the school went down so much in numbers, you know. And I was married at that time. But several of the teachers went away into war work and to service even, during World War II. But that didn't happen until after all of those student soldiers were taken out. I don't know how many student soldiers were brought in here, but it was just sorta an escape to keep from going into the fighting. I don't believe they were here a whole year. They came in the fall, I think, and I believe in April or May they pulled them all out and sent them overseas.

C: I've heard tell that after the War they had a Vet Village near the campus.

P: They did. And it was little 'ole army shacks.

C: Where were they?

P: They were off down there, towards I-10, from the campus. Pretty close. You see, at that time, the museum wasn't there and several of those buildings just weren't there then. The married students were allowed to live in those shacks. And they weren't too bad... I mean, they certainly weren't good, but they weren't too bad. After the War, so many of the boys, men, came back and they had married and had started their families and everything and they had wanted to go back and finish their college courses, and so with the G.I. Bill help. Some of them had a pretty hard time, too, especially if they had two or three children and the wife couldn't possibly work. If the wives could work,



they'd get by all right; but if their wives couldn't work, well, they couldn't get by on what the G. I. paid them. It just wasn't enough. And they'd try to work outside and all of that. I remember one man who wasn't a young fellow at all. He said he never could afford to go to college. (Well, I couldn't swallow that because a lot of people went to college that didn't have the money and worked their way. Of course, wages were low, but college expenses were low.) He had four children. He was trying to hold down a job; he had been out of high school for ten or twelve or fifteen years, or something like that, and he was just trying to do too much. He was awful worried and he was talking to me about it and he said that he could get a full-time job. I don't remember what it was; maybe as an electrician, but it was good pay. That way he could have supported his family. He said that his wife wanted him to take it or she would quit him /the job as an electrician/, but he wanted a college education. And I said, "Well, tell ya, you had ten or fifteen years to start this college education before you ever married and had four children, and I don't blame her. I'd quit you, too. You just missed your opportunity and it's just gone now." And, I said, "If it's a matter of making money, you can make more money as an electrician than you can a college graduate using a college education." Well, he just wanted it. I said, "Well, you oughta have wanted it when your opportunity was to get it, before you got married." And I think he did finally have to drop out. But that G. I. Bill simply couldn't support him.

C: Can you think of another student that you remember, maybe one that you were especially proud of?

P: Well, I have a number that I was especially proud of. One of them was Bowman, Pat Bowman. His father was E. R. Bowman, and I taught E. R. Bowman. He came along in that early period, during the Depression, and Pat was so different from E. R., his father. His father was working and supporting his mother and sister, and trying to go to school. He was having an awfully hard time. And he was a kind of student that had a chip on his shoulder. But Pat was altogether a different student. Now, E. R. had a good mind. I wouldn't say he was brilliant. I don't know how it is now with two hundred in a mach class; I wouldn't know one from the other, I don't think. But, in those days, I knew my students even if I didn't have a personal relationship with them. I knew their work so well: I saw them do the work in class, I graded their papers. I knew whether they were slow and studious, or slow and not studious, or if they were just mediocre but good workers, or if they were mediocre and didn't work, and so on. I think E. R. had just as much ability as his son but, as I say, he kinda had a chip on his shoulders, and Pat was exactly the opposite. He wanted to get everything just as perfect as it could be gotten, and he was willing to work at it to do it. So, it was real funny. One day he said, "Did you ever teach my Dad?" I should have said, "No," I guess. But I said, "Yes." He said, "What kind of a student was he?" Then he says, "He just raises Cain if I bring home these bad papers." So, I still didn't say anything. "What kind of a student was he, Mrs. Patterson, what kind of a student?" I was married then, and I said, "Well, Pat, I can say you are a better student than you Dad was." Well, he goes home full of glee to tell his dad he was a better student than he was. He came back the next day, and he said, "Mrs. Patterson, what was your

name when you taught my dad?" And I knew then that he was on to something. I said, "Pat, what happened at home?" And he said, "He /my dad/ said he never did have a Mrs. Patterson." I said, "He didn't?" So he goes and gets an old yearbook and of course looks back through it and finds out what my maiden name was. Well, then he goes home and he tells his dad what I said. He comes back and he apologizes for his dad. He said, "Well, you know, my father was supporting his mother and sister." Maybe two sisters, I don't remember. But anyway, he was supporting a family and working and trying to go to school. But he had an altogether different attitude from his son. He could have been doing all of that. A lot of students did that, but he could have had a better attitude. Pat was just exactly the opposite. He had a wonderful attitude and he wanted everything done correctly. Everything he did, I never had to nag him. When he got a paper back, he worked the things that he had missed out and brought them in to see if they were right. I never had to say anything about that. He went into the Army and I was a little disappointed in that. He got into R.O.T.C., you know. He was a brilliant young man and had a good attitude in every respect. Now the Army is fine for some people and it's the best place they could be, but not a person with a brilliant mind. It seems to me like the Army is sort of profession that "do as I tell you to do." And he wasn't that kind of a person, but... I think he's retired now, as high up as he could go. So he made a good go out of it as far as that is concerned, but he would have done it in any place, and I think would have been able to contribute more.

C: Do you remember any students that gave you a hard time? Maybe playing pranks in class?

P: No.

C: You were too strict, huh?

P: I was too strict. (Laughter) I didn't put up with much. When I first went out there, the boys had been allowed to smoke and chew tobacco in class, and spit out the window. And I said, "No more smoking!" There was a guy named Pennington. He came in one day smoking a cigarette and went and took his seat, still smoking that cigarette. I kept waiting and gave him a hard look but he didn't pay any attention. He just kept on smoking the cigarette. So, I said, "Pennington, throw out your cigarette." He said, "I will, when I finish this." or something like that. I said, "Well, you just go out now and finish it and not come back to this class." And when the teacher did anything like that, the deans would stand behind us then. Now, later on they told me that they couldn't do anything because they didn't have any backin' from the deans. But, boy, when Dean Kidd got behind them, or even Dean Thomas . . . they stood back of the teachers . . . and Dean Puckett to a certain extent. So, Pennington, he just came back to class and never did smoke again. Then the last year I was up there, it was in the mid-'60's some students had begun to go just as far as they could. One guy came to a class one day with sandals on and no socks. I didn't say anything much. I just said, "I think you better wear socks." The next day, the next class, he came back barefooted. I sent him out of class, and I said, "You report to the Dean." When I got out of class, I called Dean Thomas, who told the student, "Well, you can go to that class properly dressed or I'm dropping you right now. You can take your choice." He dropped out, times were changing.

He was one of those "hippies" in the mid-'60s. I lived right over there, close to campus, at 400 W. Schuster before I moved up here, and I saw the girls up there with bikinis on, and some of the teachers told me that they would come into class with their belly buttons showing. I just couldn't stand that. Of course, we had some ratty looking teachers up there, too. We got some of those teachers that were like that. There was one next to me and I guess he knew I didn't approve of the way he dressed, because one day he came by my door and had on a suit and tie. He said, "Mrs. Patterson, I just wanted you to know that I did have some decent clothes. I wanted you to see me in them today." And, I said, "Yes, you look very nice and when I see you passin' I don't think you're the janitor. I think you're a professor." He still dresses freakishly, I think.

C: When did girls start wearing slacks to class?

P: They started wearing slacks before I retired. But at least they were covered. But I remember one girl, a great, big, fat girl, too, and she wore shorts just above her knees. I thought, "Gee, that girl ought to cover herself up." You know, now, that's something else I noticed: in the old days, I would say from '27 on until the '50s, you seldom saw an overweight person...a young person, overweight. You saw a few chubby ones, but I'm talking about downright overweight. I tell you, I think the last year or two that I worked on registration, it looked to me like about every third girl and every fourth or fifth boy was overweight.

C: I wonder why?

P: T.V., I guess; I don't know what else. They used to walk to school and walk to the grocery store. Why, lots of students walked out there, even

across the mountains and the rough terrain in the early days.

Now, they can't even go to the corner grocery store without getting in a car. The ones I do see now I believe are more weight conscious.

C: What other contrasts can you see between the way it was, say, during the Depression?

P: During the Depression they didn't have much money, and they didn't spend. They didn't throw away their money; they didn't have it to throw. I remember they used to sell blue books to take tests in. I think they were five cents a piece or something like that, the blue books. They weren't expensive. And I would collect a nickel for each one of 'em, for their blue books. And I had students who'd say, "Well, I'm sorry, I don't have my nickel. I'll just have to bring it to test." And I would go ahead and get the blue books. But I'll tell you something that happened. Now, this was in, I guess this must have been in the spring of '30. The reason I know that--my niece and nephew were both out here with me that year, going to college. There was rumor going around the campus that the exam questions were getting out. And they were being passed around among the students in the dormitories, and so forth. Some of the students were selling them [the exam questions]. Well, I said, "That couldn't be my students because if they had the test before, they surely are dumb because they still didn't pass it, even with the questions." But, I thought, I am going to set a trap. (Now, we were to have exams typed and then we would run them off, you know, on copy machine. But we made them out ourselves first and then we took them to the

stenographer who typed them and ran them off for us.) I had a couple of dollars or something like that, not very much money, that I had collected for the blue books just before a test. But I left an old test in my own handwriting in my desk, and I put this money on the top and I said to myself, "Now, a thief could not resist taking that test and the money, if he opened my desk." I locked my desk and my door was supposed to be locked and so, the next morning all my money was gone. When my niece and nephew had told me I said, "Well, I just don't believe it." I said, "They are surely stupid if they are getting the tests and then can't pass them because too many of them are failing." The funny part about it was that the test they took wasn't the test that anybody was going to have. It was an old one. I think they finally traced that down and then they gave us files that were lockable, no one could get into, to keep our tests in. I think they finally traced it down to a student who was supposed to be a night watchman, and he had pass keys. And he was selling them; he was taking them out. And, by the way, he was a preacher's son!

(Laughter)

- C: So, the teachers would have to take the blue books and sell them in the class to people?
- P: Yes, you see... Now, you know that was something. We didn't have an honor system at the College. At the University of Texas and the University of Chicago, they had an honor system. And, I never remember a single time seeing any cheating. Our finals in the University of Chicago were oral, so there was no chance of cheating. And only on time in the University of Texas did I see anything going

on that I thought was cheating. There was an honor system there. The teachers would come in and give you your exam and leave the room and you wouldn't see them any more until they came back to collect the papers. It worked then, but it would not have worked in the College here. It just wouldn't have worked. There was too many different types of people. But one time in an advanced algebra class in the University of Texas . . . well, the teacher came in, she handed out the test and went back to her office, and we didn't see her until it was over. Well, one of the teachers, Miss Decker, was in that class. There was a question that no one in class understood; and we discussed it: "What do you think she means by that?" Miss Decker thought it was cheating. And I said, "Well, we didn't even agree." She heard it, and we didn't agree what we thought she meant by the question. You know, how questions can be ambiguous, even in math or any other subject, as far as that's concerned. And part of us thought she meant it one way and thought it meant this, and part of us thought it meant that. And I guess everybody answered it according to the way they thought it meant, so they certainly didn't answer it all alike. And Miss Decker said, "I think that was perfectly terrible. You discussed the question in class." I said, "We weren't discussing the answer, we just wondered what in the world she meant." Now, we might have said something about, "Well, now, she meant this theorem or she meant this theorem in math," or something like that. I don't remember the detail of it, but it wasn't any solution or anything. We were just wondering what she meant. But, anyway, that's the only time I ever saw cheating. But here at the College, I soon saw that they would cheat if they had a chance, just like in high school.



C: So, what would you do to keep them from it?

P: I would stay in there.

C: Sure, and watch.

P: And watch. And also, if we had room, but many, many times we would not have room, I would alternate the students. Finally, it got so that the classes were so large and I saw, I knew, they were cheating, and I would make two sets of questions and I'd alternate them. Of course they could look ahead and see, but I stayed in there. And I caught some cheaters. By the way, I met the wife of one of those students that I caught cheating. He wasn't copying from somebody else's paper, but he kept doing this, and I thought, "I wonder if his nose is bleeding," you know. He kept holding a handkerchief and so finally I watched him closely. And I saw that he was looking in his hand. He wasn't just blowing his nose or anything, and I said, "Let me have that." He said, "What?" And I said, "That handkerchief." He said, "It's nothing but a handkerchief." I said, "Well, let me have it then." And when I took it out, he had all sorts of things written down in that. I've never seen anything like it. He could have covered it up with his fist, with his handkerchief in his fist. And yet he had all sorts of things in there. We had a week for review, and I liked it. And that week we would go over... everything we had had in the semester's course and stop on the things where there was a number of people that wanted help on it. And I never threw a question at them that they hadn't heard of, that we hadn't done in class. In other words, I told my students, "Now, I give thorough tests, thorough finals. I cover just as much of the course as I can in the three hours, but I will never give you anything that we haven't had." And I wouldn't.

Now, I had teachers in the University that would throw a question at you that you had never even heard of or no one in class had, just to test your native ability, I suppose. I didn't feel like that was a fair question on a final which your grade depended on, and the students in my class did know what they were going to get on their final. This student had covered it pretty thoroughly, believe me, and it was all written on the paper. I took this and reported it to the dean. Dean Puckett said, "Well, he could have memorized that." If he had memorized it, why did he have it written on the paper and was referring to it?

C: Well, you taught algebra...?

P: I taught algebra, trigonometry, and analytical geometry. Now, at first, they were all separate courses. Algebra first and then trigonometry, and then analytics. Also, we would have at least once a year some courses in solid geometry which they should have had in high school, but some of them hadn't had it. About once a year they'd have that, which was kinda backwards because they should have had it before they had the analytical geometry. But, of course, it was just plain analytical geometry anyway. Especially the engineers had to have that solid geometry. That's what I taught. When I first came out there, they didn't have the academic and the engineering math courses separated at all. Later on, when there were so many academic students and they required six hours of math, college math, they separated it and gave the academic students sort of a general survey of the math. It wasn't the intensive course in mathematics that the engineers had to go on with their higher math and the engineering courses. It wasn't that kind of a course; it was sort of a survey. They had a little bit of each one of 'em.

C: Did you prefer teaching the engineering students?

P: Yes, I preferred it. Because they understood that if they didn't learn their math, they just well drop engineering. And the academic students...now, I had some excellent academic students, and they would take the engineering math in preference to just this limited course that the academics could get by with for their six hours requirement. And I had a number of students who I would encourage to major in math. The odd part about it now is that they yell their heads off about not having math and science teachers for the high school. Do you know whose fault it is, a lot of it? It's the Education Department. I had a number of brilliant math students, and they liked math. And I'd say, "Why don't you major in math and teach it?" They made them take those education courses. Most of them would come back and say, "I cannot stand those education courses. It's just a waste of time." They didn't ever tell the students over there that they could get a temporary certificate and teach three years and get a permanent certificate without taking any education courses. I took six hours in education down at the University of Texas, and my motive for taking it was because I thought I might want to go to Dallas high schools. They had the best schools in Texas and I wanted to teach there. They had the Assistant Superintendent teaching and education course down there every year in the summer time. I took those education courses just to get to know the Assistant Superintendent. And I told some of those students who would have been math teachers, "You don't have to take those education courses." I said, "If they want a math teacher real bad here in El Paso High School, and you've got a good record in mathematics

out here, and you've got four years of college mathematics, they're going to give you a job and give you a temporary certificate because I know people who got a temporary certificate. You go ahead and teach two years and you send it in to the State Teachers' office and you can get your permanent Teachers' Certificate, which is the way I got mine. I didn't have all of those education courses." They'd come back they'd say, "They won't give us a certificate." I said, "They don't have to give you a certificate." But I know they lost a number of teachers, which would have been good. I know one young man teaching up at Socorro, New Mexico College of Mines now. He went into college teaching. He got this Master's Degree somewhere, I don't know, I think Cal Tech or someplace, and got his Master's Degree. I'll have to tell you one story. It's kind of personal, but just to let you know what a hard-boiled teacher I was. One president came in with one idea: to build up the enrollment of the college regardless of who we got. Before he came here, we would have a whole bunch of failures each semester, just like they did at the University of Texas because our standards were high. If they didn't pass, they didn't stay in college. When this president came he didn't want any teacher to fail any. I remember the president saying one time in faculty meeting that he was not concerned about teachers. He said, "I hire teachers just like I'd buy mules, as cheap as I can get them and I'll watch their records to see how many failures they have." It wasn't very long before he found out that I didn't pass a student who didn't make the grade, though I was always willing to give a student any help I could. The previous president had put Gladys Gregory and me on the athletics committee. We and a few others on the committee lived up to the rules and unless a student earned sufficient grade points, he was bumped off the team.

A football player had failed his math course. A D would give him enough points to stay on the team. He went to the president asking him to get me to change his grade from F to D. The president called me in and said the boy said he had learned more math in my course than he'd ever learned in any math course. "And she still failed me." The president asked if I'd change his grade. I said, "No, that was what he made and if you want it changed go to the registrar's office; change it and put your initial on the change." Which was the procedure to change a grade after it was recorded. I never followed up to see what happened. Needless to say, I was not a favorite with that president and Gladys and I were soon off the athletics committee.

C: Well, I think the College has been very lucky to have you on those years.

P: I don't regret it. Just like this E. R. Bowman, after he was in my class, why, he told a lot of his fraternity brothers, "Now you get in Mrs. Patterson's class, you'll come out of there knowing something. You won't come out there and get up in calculus and flunder around." And he said, "You'll appreciate it then." Well, these old boys came in and some of them weren't prepared and they didn't work very hard. Of course, they began failing, so then they began jumping on E. R. about it. He said, "Okay, you stay in there till the end of your freshman year. You take all your freshman year. And you get into some higher math courses and you're going to find out how much it's meant to you." And after that, I had a number of the boys expressing this appreciation. One of them told me one time, "You know, Mrs. Patterson," he said, "freshmen hated you with a vengeance." Now, they didn't all, but some of them even appreciated me then. But I admit a lot of them didn't like me; they thought I was awfully hard-boiled. And, he said, "When they get up in calculus, they begin to say, well, maybe just maybe

she was right about that. And they begin to like you a little better." Then said, "When they get on up into junior and their senior math courses and their engineering courses, they love you." Because they found out I was demanding. I remember one time in class--I always sent my students to the board. They said that was high-schoolish. I didn't care whether it was high school or not, I was interested in them learning. Well, I had a routine like this: we'd go into class and I would take up their homework papers, every class, and then I would say, "Are there any particular problems or questions you want to ask about this?" There would always be some. We would go over those. Then, I would take up the new work. Now, some teachers never did take up the new work. But I did. I took up the new work and I went over it and I explained it, and then I sent them to the board and we practiced on that. And I'd begun to kind of, just sort of keep a count and the brilliant students would know how to work the problem when they first went to the board. The mediocre students wouldn't know and would have to have help at the board after I had explained it in the class. And the slower, the dumber, students would only get it with a struggle and three problems to practice on. If I had some students who were constantly tardy, I would give them three tardys and make it a cut. And after the fifth cut they were out. They couldn't come back to class after the sixth cut. The deans stood back of us on this. But they would go ahead and get those three tardys and get one cut, and then they'd get three more tardys, and it just went on that way. I announced in one call, "Now, when that last bell rings, I am going to lock this door. And if you're tardy, you're just going to get a cut."

You're not going to get in." So, I tried it a few times and some of them got cuts. So, one day, I never will forget it; it was up in Old Main and the room was down on the northwest corner...hot as blitzen in the summer, no air condition, and cold as the North Pole in the winter time. The windows were all rattlin' and everything with the wind blowing. But, anyway, a couple of students came in. Oh, they just had this problem that they just worked on for hours. And it was two pretty good students. And I said, "Well, what's the matter with you guys. You know how to work that problem; we did it in class." "Well, this one just didn't do like the ones we worked in class," and all this and that and the other. And, they had played a trick on me. You asked about tricks, and this was a trick they had played on me. The second bell rang, and I got up, and before I got down there the door was locked. (Laughter) And then I knew what they had done! And these boys went downstairs just fast as they could go just dying a-laughin', you know. And so, I just went on back to my office and sat down. In about ten minutes one of the students came down and said, "Mrs. Patterson, aren't you coming to class?" And I said, "Well, I came down there and the door was locked." They said, "Well, the second bell had rung." So, I said, "Now, that's not going to make a bit of difference. I'm still going to do it." And I said, "If you lock me out, I'm just going to give everybody a cut 'cause I won't know who's there and who's not there." (Laughter) I remember, I don't suppose you remember the Sputnki, the Russian Sputnik?

C: Sure I do.

P: Well, okay. That was the year of the Sputnik and, oh, they got all stirred up and the math courses were very popular. So, one day, I had

sent them to the board. Sometimes I couldn't send them all to the board, for lack of board space, but I would do the best I could. I would send half of them and then the others. So, I got as many to the board as I could. We had lots of boards in there. It irritated me no end to get a classroom with one little 'ole board like that 'cause I wanted to see my students working and so I sent them to the board. And they were kind of dragging that day and I said, "Now, let me tell you if you guys don't get busy and get to doing something in here, the Sputnik will sure get us." One of the boys said, "If it does, Mrs. Patterson, it sure won't be your fault." Oh, I like teaching. I don't like discipline, I never did. I don't like discipline. But I like teaching.

C: It sounds like you were a wonderful teacher.

P: I really like teaching. I don't admit at all to being a soft teacher. I wasn't, but you can't be soft in a course like mathematics. And, another thing, to my way of thinking, in mathematics, people need a teacher. Now, in history, and maybe in English literature...not in grammar, but in English literature...they can read it and get it themselves if they want to. But that's not true with mathematics and when people tell you "Well, I never had to study mathematics," they're lying.