

Miss Martha A. Montgomery

Interviewed by
Miss Betty Turnell

for the
Decatur Public Library

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40 North Drive, The Elms
Decatur, Illinois 62526
December 10, 1976

Miss Martha A. Montgomery
Grey Rocks, R. 1
Maroa, Illinois 61756

Dear Martha:

I have finished typing your comments on the recording we made at your home, and I would like to verify the spelling of some names. If these are not correct, will you please let me know?

Lucien Renshaw
Amelia Souver
Johannes Zuber (better known as Souver) *as Souver*
May Porter, Superintendent of country school (A woman?) *yes*
Rolling North School *Russbach*
Gretchen Pippin and Edith *Eide* at Mt. Holyoke *Pippin Eide*
Commander "Piggy" McDonald, Jacksonville Naval Air Station
Edna ~~Esen~~ and Peter ~~Cerino~~, Macy's *SERINO -*
Dr. Leslie Bryan
Dr. Youngerd, Oak Park High School *~~S.A.~~ principal*
William Fromm, Lakeview High School
Name of museum and town where your brother lived near Baltimore -
Winterthur? *yes*

Eysen

Youngard

I certainly enjoyed meeting you and hearing your story. It was an excellent beginning for the project. I believe the only other comments you might make would be your reactions to the events of the war as you were in the command centers of the Naval Air Stations. If you want to record this, perhaps we could do so after Christmas.

I will give the cassette and the typed record to the library for their records.

I really appreciate the names you gave me and will get in touch with those people after Christmas.

Thanks again - and best wishes for the season!

Sincerely,
Betty
Elizabeth Turnell
Tel. 877 - 9668

Miss Martha A. Montgomery

November, 1976

Q. This is Betty Turnell with our guest today, Miss Martha A. Montgomery, and we are in this interesting old family home in the country west of Maroa in Austin Township. Is this your old family home? Have you always lived here?

A. I was born in this house in 1911 - June 27. My brother had arrived fourteen months earlier so I literally pushed him out of the cradle, and I was in. My sister came along two years later, and she also was born here, as were all of my father's family except him. He was born in the little old house that was on the place where my grandfather and grandmother lived when they were married in 1880 on January 14. Grandmother didn't like the little old house out in the Polywog area as it was known, and so she said to Frank, her husband - John Francis Montgomery - she said, "Frank, when we take that next load of steers to Chicago, we're going to take the entire money from that and build a new house because I won't raise my children in this little old house. It isn't fit for children."

And so when Frank took the load of steers to Chicago - and he raised fine cattle - they brought \$2000, and Grandmother planned the house. It was built by Mark Waller of Maroa. He was a carpenter. The plans - I don't know where they came from. I think Grandmother made them because one distinguishing feature of the house is that she cut off the corners and put in windows in each corner. The House is as it was when she built it. The

stairway in the front has a lovely walnut staircase that was probably made in this area, but the stairs are very steep because Grandmother wanted a front central hall, and \$2000 didn't go very far in building this house. The little room on the north which was added is like those you see in many of the country homes as you drive around. These were known as "hired men's houses." They were separate and apart from the house. The itinerant hired men were housed in them. They had a narrow bed for the hired man, a bed made of corn shucks. The houses were set apart from the house because of the men's tendency to smoke. They were always afraid that those little houses would burn. This house was later added to the main house as a wash room. It has now become a small study where we work, and a small library. But that was originally not a part of the house.

My brother, my sister, and I were all born in this house. We lived here all our youth until my brother went away to Harvard in 1928, and I went to Illinois State Normal in 1928, and my sister was in Decatur High School in 1928. She graduated from Stephen Decatur High School, whereas I graduated from Kenney, as did my brother. We went to high school there, and I think we really received a good education in that small school with its limited curriculum. There were fourteen in the graduating class, and all of them have turned out exceedingly well.

Q. To go back just a bit, maybe we can find out just how your grandparents happened to settle in this area?

A. My great-great grandfather, James Renshaw, came to Decatur before it was laid out as a town. He operated the first tavern which was licensed in the fall of 1829 - for which he paid \$6. A tavern at that time was a general store as well as a place to dispense liquor. He had a motley number of customers coming in trading their pork, their skins, their pelts for goods such as cream ware, tea, sugar, spice, coffee, and other things which were brought from St. Louis. Every fall James Renshaw drove a herd of hogs to St. Louis to market them. His son, Lucien Renshaw, married Martha Jane Walker of Macoupin County, and they lived just at the top of Stevens' Creek on West Main Road. He operated a saw mill there, and his daughter, Minnie Renshaw, was born at that place. She married the widower Frank Montgomery, who had come out to Austin Township about 1868 or 1870. His first wife had died in childbirth, leaving one child. Grandmother and he were married in 1880, as I said before, in January. When she first saw Grandfather, Grandmother didn't think he was very prepossessing, although her cousin, Debbie Smallwood, who had married Samuel Montgomery, said, "Don't let him come near you. He's very fascinating." Grandmother didn't think he was fascinating at all at first, but she soon did, and she adored Frank, who died in 1917. Grandmother lived on until 1949 and was one of the oldest citizens to compete in the state fair. She was killed at the age of 90. In 1929 very bodaciously, she had bought the old Montgomery home which had been settled by William Fletcher Montgomery. He had come here from Ohio, having lived there a few years before coming on to Illinois. William Fletcher Montgomery was born in 1812 in

Frederick County, Virginia, just out of Winchester, and he had followed a young woman, Amelia Souver, whose family had moved to Clark County, Ohio. In Clark County, William Fletcher came and worked in flour mills because his family had operated woolen and flour mills in Winchester. He married Amelia Souver, and they came a few years later to Hickory Point Township. His house still stands, known to many, at the corner of MacArthur and Mound Road. It stands on the hill in all its glory, and in the autumn the trees that William Fletcher Montgomery planted are lovely. The thirty-six acres which make up Montgomery Hills were originally a part of the home of William Fletcher Montgomery. He lived there in a little cabin. His brother, George Bruce Montgomery, had lived in what is now Strawberry Hills, where the Strawberry Hills Apartments are. He and his young wife lived there for a short time, but they soon moved into their own cabin. They had oiled windows, and when Johannes Zuber, better known as Souver, came out to visit his daughter and her husband in Illinois, he drove out from Ohio. He lost a good team of horses on the way, but he gave Amelia Souver \$50 to buy windowpanes for the cabin. They were highly prized because there weren't very many windows in Illinois and Macon County in 1836. There were some, of course, but not out in the fields, and although it is now a part of Decatur, the cabin was a long way out at that time. James Renshaw had operated the tavern for a good many years, but he bought land in what was then in the country out near where the Wabash Railroad Station is and a little to the north of there his house stands now at the corner of Moffat and Broadway.

It's in a sad state of repair. It's one of the oldest houses in Decatur still standing. It has a stucco cover over the brick and is painted a bilious yellow. It looks horrible standing next to the Longview project, but it is an old, old house. It also has a central stairway like the one which Grandmother had coveted so when she built her own home in Polywog.

The land where I live was known as "Polywog" because it was very swampy. It wasn't drained, and it wasn't tiled. The roads had a gate at each end, perhaps at a mile. They pastured the roads. You can find this in the township records of Austin Township. They actually put a gate at each end and pastured the roads and raised cattle. There was little grain raised out here at that time since the land was so swampy. It still bears the name of Polywog today.

Well, Great-grandfather Montgomery had bought seven quarter-sections of land from the railroad. He paid \$10.25 an acre. You may remember that this land section - 16 miles wide, eight miles on either side of the railroad, had been given to them by the state of Illinois in order to get them to build railroads. This was part of that land. William Fletcher Montgomery had bought a quarter section for each of his seven children. Five of those quarters are still in the family today. Descendants of the family are those of John Frank Montgomery, my grandfather. Then there was Samuel's property - just across the road from me. There was Patrick Henry's, just down the road. There was Rachel Hays', two miles down. Her descendant, Robert Hays, still lives there. Then there was the

Trowbridge family, which came down through Mary Montgomery, who married Grayson Hanks, and their daughter married the Trowbridge. It's sometimes known as the Trowbridge farm today. Most of that farm has been sold, but the house is still there. It was built in small sections and then put together, as some of those early houses were. There were four of us who received centennial plaques this summer for farms that were in the family for over 100 years.

My grandfather raised fine cattle - shorthorns and Herefords - and he competed with his first cousin, Ben Frank Harris, who had a great deal of land around Mahomet. He founded one of the important banks in Champaign. His home is now Cole Hospital in Champaign. The two cousins competed, and it is told that one time Ben Frank Harris had paraded his car load of fat cattle down State Street in Chicago. This is written in Champaign history. There was always considerable rivalry and vying back and forth between them regarding their bulls and cows. They had a common grandmother - and here were the two of them in Illinois breaking the sod and settling the prairie.

The land was very swampy. It was difficult to cultivate until after it was tilled. Today it is some of the most productive land in Macon County, but it wasn't in the '70's. This was some of the latest land in the county to be settled because of the fact that it was so swampy. Settlements in Decatur were made about 1829 or maybe even 1826. DeWitt County was then a part of Macon County. When DeWitt County was broken off, there is an interesting story. When they created DeWitt County, they tried very hard to get DeWitt to take Austin Township, Long Creek, and Maroa Township. DeWitt County said, "What do you think we are - a bunch of fools - that we

would take that swampy, no-good land?" Today I'm sure they wish they had it, but here it is in Macon County.

I had a very uneventful childhood. We played in the creek which ran through the farm, we played marbles, we worked. We had all kinds of chores. We walked to the one-room country school, and one of the things I remember is that we had a horse, a very contrary, stubborn horse, but three of us would pile on old Bert's back, and off we'd go to school three quarters of a mile away. One day my brother, who was filled with the devil, kicked her in the flanks, and we all ended up in a mud hole. I was so angry that I stalked home, not about to ride that horse. But to get to high school, we drove a two-wheeled cart in the bad months of the spring. It was impossible to get through, and oftentimes the wheels would be so filled with mud that you couldn't get through even with one horse and a two-wheeled cart.

We used to drive a team and wagon to school sometimes. They would take us in to school, and we would board in Kenney, four and three-quarters miles away, and we would come home on Friday night. The roads were that bad.

It's impossible today when we have a modern black top, to think of those roads as they were, and this is less than fifty years ago. You put your car up on blocks, and you left it there. It sat there all winter, and you used horses and buggies and storm buggies for winter transportation. It was impossible to get through.

When I finished high school, I went to Normal for one year and worked that year taking care of children to earn my board and room. I was sick during the winter term and had to drop out of school after

my sister took the measles. I had to stay at home until I took them, and then I developed a kind of inner ear infection, a type of mastoid infection. I was out of school that winter term. I went back to summer school and finished up one year of Normal at the end of August.

At that time - in 1929 - you could teach with one year of college. My mother had found out that there was a one-room country school named Wood School that didn't have a teacher the week before school was to start. So we stopped to see the superintendent of schools, May Porter. Also as I came home from Normal with my bag and baggage I went to see the Board of Directors: Bert Vance, Frank Simpson, and I can't remember who the third one was, but I was hired on the spot on Friday, to start teaching the following Monday morning. I was eighteen years old. The kids were almost as old as I was. It was a one-room country school, with a big jacketed stove that sat in the middle of the room, and an ante-room, where the kids put their coats and lunch pails. I suppose there was a bucket of water and a wash basin.

So my teaching career started. I had seven grades, I earned \$115 a month, the fall term of 1929. I stayed there one year, had a contract to go back the next year, but I then found another country school where my aunt had taught - Rolling North School, just north of Warrensburg and a mile east. I was employed to teach there, and I stayed there five years.

Then along came the depression. Teachers' salaries, which had been up to \$117.50 a month (they split the dollar then) when I started teaching, were cut to \$80 a month one year. That wasn't very much, but it didn't cost much to live.

Corn was 106 a bushel. Pigs were worth nothing, practically. Then the next year I got \$100 again, and then my salary went back to \$115, but I decided at the end of my sixth year of teaching that I should go back to the University of Illinois and get my degree. Every summer I had gone to summer school. I think I ended with twelve summers straight of summer school.

In 1936 I went back to the University of Illinois. At that time there weren't a lot of older people going back to school. I decided to major in Latin although I hadn't had any Latin for 9 years. I learned the language again the second time, and I've always enjoyed it. I graduated from the University of Illinois the summer of 1937 and immediately started work on my master's. I taught that year at Sullivan High School. I taught there for five years and two months, and I loved every minute of it. There couldn't be a nicer place to teach than in Sullivan back in 1937. I stayed there until 1942. In the summer of 1942 I was just outside of New Haven, Connecticut, at Wallingford, visiting my brother, and I decided to apply for the Navy.

I applied for a commission in the Navy, and I was one of the first officers other than the very initial group of about forty, who were commissioned. There were only 435 of us. I was commissioned as an ensign, because to be commissioned as a J.G. you had to be thirty-four years of age, or to have had some terrific background. Well, my background wasn't so terrific. So I was finally given a commission in 1942, the 14th of September - or the 10th of September.

I was to go on active duty the 10th of November. Needless to say, it was hard to wait from the first of October, when I received word that I had been commissioned, until the first of November. I

left Sullivan about the 7th of November, amidst a round of parties. There were two of us. Alice Moody had been commissioned as a mis-shipmen, and I was commissioned as an ensign.

So off we went into the bright blue yonder. There were a lot of parties as we left, and lots of gifts, and people were very gay, but off we went to the join the men who were working. I was sent to Mt. Holyoke College for six weeks' indoctrination. Couldn't tell my left foot from my right foot. I had a terrible time learning to march, and if it hadn't been for my two roommates, Gretchen Piffin and Edity Ides from Oklahoma, I probably would never have gotten through, but eventually we were finished with that indoctrination, and then they shipped a group of us down to Jacksonville, Florida, to the Naval Air Station. From that time on, I did all naval air station duty.

We went to Jacksonville thinking we were pretty good. We knew our left foot from our right, but Commander Piggy McDonald, who was in charge of us, decided that we were terrible, and so we did our indoctrination all over again, only it was a cram course this time. He was a graduate of Annapolis, and he thought we were absolutely the most ignorant, dumbest group of women he had ever seen. There were thirty-six of us down in the Naval Air Station. We marched to meals, we marched to classes, we marched to bed, almost, and finally we finished that five weeks' term and then - assignments. Where would we go?

Well, I was sent to Naval Air Station Anacostia in Washington D.C. We arrived there in the dead of winter, the middle of January. The streets were ruddy. The buses could not get through. They had had a terrific snowstorm. My roommate, Evelyn Jones from Detroit, Michigan,

and I ended up in the Y.W.C.A. The Y.W.C.A. threatened us the next day - we had to get out. Housing was very tight, and we couldn't find a place to live. A cousin finally suggested an unfurnished apartment that was available. He saw it listed in the Sunday paper and called us. We rented that apartment and I lived there until September, 1944. We had arrived in January, 1943.

Now what did a Naval Air Station which had never had a woman officer do with them? They didn't know what to do when they came. There were about thirty enlisted WAVES, but certainly they didn't need five officers to play herd on them. So as a result those of us who kept in the background got assigned to other jobs, and the girls who had always tried to be right up in the front row when the captain came around were placed in charge of the WAVES.

My roommate went into communications, and I stood communications duty once or twice a month. I always had a terrible time breaking a code.

I was sent to Public Works. Now what does a Public Works officer do with a WAVE officer who suddenly appears on his doorstep? Well, the war was well under way, and vehicles had been pouring into the Naval Air Station. There wasn't any record of them, so Commander Bill Johnson said, "Miss Montgomery, take inventory of these vehicles."

Well, I tramped all over that base trying to find garbage trucks and dump trucks and cranes and ambulances and station wagons until I finally had a complete inventory, and so I was out of a job.

There's a wonderful story about that. We didn't have titles to the vehicles so I compiled all of the information and had it typed, and then I went down to get the titles. Unfortunately, my commanding officer - my senior officer in Public Works - witnessed the Captain's

signature. Sam Ingersoll, the captain of the station, wasn't about to have a junior officer so we had to make over almost two hundred certificates of title. In the Washington bureau that licensed the vehicles they were absolutely livid. It was only by persuasion and I suppose a few tears that I got them to make them over.

Now that that job was over, what was he going to do with me next? I found that I was in charge of dispatching. Then the next thing that happened was that I was being held responsible for maintenance of all those vehicles. There were over two hundred of them by that time. I finally said, "Look. You're holding me responsible for the maintenance of this operation, and you've never put me in charge of it. I'm not going to do one thing more."

Well, this was almost mutiny, but the next day I found on my desk a little memo written in pencil, which said, "Effective this date, Lieutenant J. G. Montgomery (I had been promoted) is responsible for the entire operation." I don't think another soul except me ever saw that memo, but it satisfied me.

Q. Wasn't maintenance of all that equipment a terrific job for a young person to take care of?

A. As per usual, I was in over my head. I didn't know the answers, but I learned a great deal, and I listened more than I talked. I was responsible for twenty-four hour operation of those vehicles. The VIP's used to fly into Washington. We had to get them to Patuxent or to Washington. I ran up against Harold Ickes on one of those jobs. We had to meet a bus at the Navy Yard one day, and I told the driver, H. L. Lee, to lose no time. He was promptly arrested for speeding, and I got an official reprimand as if it were from Harold Ickes, who was bent on saving gas, for telling him to speed up.

And so it was. It was a terrific job for a girl. I don't know how I did it. I used to say they are hated my skirts. I remember one time going out to inspect the garbage truck which the captain of the station had complained about. It was smelling and spreading things. I said to the driver, Jenkins, "Clean this up and let me see it when it's finished."

Well, he appeared in the office about thirty minutes later and said, "It's all done, Miss Montgomery." I went down to see it. "Well," I said, "That's one hell of a job Jenkins," and promptly I had a grievance filed against me for cussing out the driver, and I said to my boss, "I didn't cuss him out at all. I just described the kind of job he had done, which was terrible."

Well, he did the job over, and I guess my boss understood the situation. He was a very wonderful person. After that, when I was transferred to San Diego to the Naval Air Station, I was replaced by a senior lieutenant - a man - and a warrant officer. It took two of them to do the job which one J. G. WAVE had done, and I had done a mighty good job, according to the reports we got afterwards. You never hear it when you're there.

I went out to the Naval Air Station in San Diego. You go from the divine to the ridiculous. There I did educational counseling service in getting the men rated. I had been there I think ten days when one of the commanders in the office strolled into my office, and said, "Miss Montgomery, tomorrow you will address the admiral's conference on current affairs." We had an admiral who was senior in command of the Naval Air Station, and I said, "I will not." He looked at me and said, "I am telling you you will do this." I said, "Unfortunately,

I won't do it tomorrow, but I'll do it a week from tomorrow. I'll go and sit in on your briefing and the next week I will do it." Well, to make a long story short, I appeared a week later. I was scared to death. They all outranked me by at least three stripes, and it was rather ridiculous for a WAVE officer (by this time I had my senior grade) to address the admiral's staff on what was happening. They were all Annapolis graduates, and very familiar with the war situation, but I was to brief them on the events of the last week. I did it by staying up all night and getting the latest radio reports because they didn't have time to keep up with all of those. I did that as long as I stayed there - until April of 1946.

I had lots of fun at the Naval Air Station. You worked hard. You had a good time. It was interesting all the time because something different was happening. I bought a little Model A Ford roadster, a convertible with a rumble seat. This used to provide transportation. The officer in charge of the maintenance department had a little red rumble-seated roadster, too - a Ford make - and because he wanted a better rating very badly he used to take care of my car for me. This was off the record, but he used to take care of my little Model A Ford, which I was very proud of. When I left San Diego, I put an ad in the North Islander, and that car sold for \$200. If it were available today, I suppose it would be \$2000, I don't know, but it ran fine. It was a very rakish little car and furnished us easy transportation anywhere we wanted to go. I was able to take many flights up and down the coast in Naval air craft. If there was space available and you were going and knew the pilot on the plane, you could almost always get a ride and go up or down the coast or inland or fly home from time to time if you happened to be off duty

and you were out of that. In the spring of 1946 I came home. I had been at home only about ten days and was ready to go East to my brother's when the telephone rang and I was offered a job to teach at the University of Indiana. Teachers were scarce, and I was to teach at the extension department in Indianapolis. My classes consisted of four groups of students waiting to get into Purdue University. They were all men. I was just out of the Navy, and I readily had to work very hard. I was teaching English - rhetoric and composition to these pre-Purdue students. It was great fun. I worked there for sixteen weeks the spring semester and was offered a position teaching at summer school, but I didn't want to teach summer school. In the meantime a job had opened up at Oak Park High School in the Latin Department. Dr. Younger from Oak Park High School interviewed me and offered me the job, and I said I would teach there that fall.

I hadn't realized what 3000 students in a school would be, what the slow English and Latin students would be, and after the teaching at Purdue, it didn't prove very inspiring or stimulating, and I didn't care for all the rigamarole of teaching in a very large system with all of its red tape. I stayed there until the first of February, the end of the fall semester, and went back to work for the Navy. I doubled my salary working for the Navy in civilian rehabilitation work and counseling work. I worked there until their Congressional appropriation ran out about the first of July. I was then to go to Great Lakes Training Station as an efficiency expert in preparing them in case there should be another war. Luckily, that situation didn't come through so I went off to New York and went to Parson's School of Design for six weeks under the G.I. Bill of Rights. I had a perfectly marvelous time. I saw New York. In that course I had to visit many historic

buildings. It was really one of the most stimulating and exciting things I've ever done because I was constantly on field trips and doing things, but came the first of September, and I didn't have a job. I didn't want to teach again and so I went to Macy's, the world's largest department store. I had had no merchandising experience. I was employed to do counseling and guidance work with senior citizens who were about to retire. They had compulsory retirement at age 65 there. There were over 11,000 employees in the downtown store. At Christmas time the number of employees went up to 20,000. I soon found that I could persuade and wheedle employees to retire, even though their retirement was not very large. I worked at this for two years. Then I worked in operation and management on the selling floor. Then I went into merchandising. I had three years of training in merchandising at the Macy store. I was first on a training squad, which is one of the most coveted positions for a young person to get into for training in buying or merchandising. I was fortunate. After that I was trained in better dresses - the one department I had said when I was interviewed that I didn't want to go into. It often happens that you end up where you had thought you didn't want to be. I was trained by two very wonderful people - Edna Isen and Peter Cerino. From there I went to the Macy Kansas City Store as a buyer of better dresses, and I moved back and forth to New York on buying trips very frequently. I worked there for two years, and during that course of time I took the bridal department - again a job I didn't know anything about. I bought bridal dresses, misses' better dresses, evening gowns, and women's dresses from nothing to second best in the whole Macy corporation, and there were about twelve or fourteen stores at that time. While I was in New York on a buying trip, I was approached by Thorndike and Deland, one of the largest employment

offices for ready-to-wear and asked if I would be interested in a job in Baltimore. My brother was living ⁱⁿ Winterthur. He was a director of Winterthur Museum at that time. It would be nice to be close to him, and so I stopped on my way back to Kansas City and was interviewed and employed on the spot. I went home to Kansas City to resign my position. From there I moved to Baltimore, where I lived for six years. Taking a dress department that was static and low priced, I raised the price lines and had a very successful six years there.

To backtrack a bit, when I was at Macy's in New York, I had joined the Naval Reserve. I had done weekend training in the Naval Reserve at Floyd Bennett Field, another Naval Air Station. I was assigned work on the two days a week and I was there on the weekends, plus the two weeks' training duty in the summer. This was in personnel work. I continued in the Reserve, going one weekend a month and two weeks in summer school until I left New York. Then I did Naval Reserve duty at Aletha, Kansas, and again I was in personnel duty. When I went to Baltimore, I was immediately transferred back to Floyd Bennet Field, so I had unbroken service in the Naval/Air Reserve Training, always at Naval Air Stations. I served as personnel officer with a helicopter squadron, with service squadrons, and finally I was attached to the Air Wing Staff, which is the command area, still doing personnel work. When I was transferred to Baltimore, I drove the 200 miles per weekend from Baltimore to New York Floyd Bennet Field so that I had no break in service. In 1962, having had one of the best years in retailing that I had ever had, it seemed to me expedient to retire from the retail world, come back to Illinois, finish out my teaching requirements for a pension, and put down some roots.

There were a lot of things that had to be done. I had to close my home in New York, which I had kept through these years, I had to close my Baltimore apartment, and I had to finish up my job.

Well, on the Fourth of July weekend in 1962 I helped supervise the loading of all my bags and baggage - a trailer load full - I'm a pack rat and an accumulator - and we came home.

The house, which I had visited shortly in May, was coming along. The work of painting, and plastering wasn't done, but I was to go off to summer school. Having not been teaching for twenty years, I knew there were new methods and new things which I must learn before I went back to teaching. Boulder, Colorado, offered a five and a half week course. Being a glutton for work, I signed up for seven and a half hours of work - a course in audio-visual aids, which I knew I would need to bring new methods of teaching into my class room, two courses in Latin. Now, remember, I hadn't had any Latin for twenty years - so I had a course in the odes of Horace and a course in Cicero. One day I was going to quit one course, the next day I was going to drop the next one, and the third day I was going to drop the next one - but then another week would go by. I studied night and day and at the end of the course, Dr. Rhodes of Horace said to me, "I told my roommate that I had some dummy in my class who hadn't had any Latin for twenty years and thought she was going to pass my course." She gave me a "B" and congratulated me. I worked desperately hard so I really learned Latin the third time. I had learned it as a sophomore and a junior in high school, where I had had an absolutely marvelous teacher. We had had the state high school visitor when I was in high

school, and he had said to Miss Jacobs, our instructor, "You have one of the ten best Latin classes in the state of Illinois." She worked us hard, but we learned a great deal. When I went back to the University of Illinois in 1937, I had to learn it over again. Because of the thorough grounding I had had, it came back gradually, and then again in 1962, I finished up the five and a half weeks very creditably. I didn't make Bronze Tablet as I might have at the University of Illinois, and as I did in 1937, but here I was. I had earned seven and a half hours of credit; I had worked like a dog, and I had only worked. I had not seen Boulder, Colorado, at all. I had kept my nose in a book about twenty hours out of the twenty-four.

I came home, I moved in, and I was very fortunate to be assigned to teach honors English to freshmen and Latin at Lakeview High School. David Beggs, one of the most talented and innovative young men in education was a very creative person, and I was very fortunate to teach under David Beggs III, who met an untimely death a short time later. It was a great loss to education. He had brought into the school at Lakeview new innovative methods, and he had the qualities of leadership to instill his corps of teachers with enthusiasm and excitement, and it was an exciting place to be. Whereas Oak Park, where I had taught just after the war, was very stilted, this was an entirely different place, with lots of freedom. There was excitement in teaching. Teachers were free to try new things, to work with them. If you failed, you threw them out and started with another type.

Along the way, David Beggs was unfortunately involved in an automobile accident and left Lakeview High School and went to Barrington High School. He was replaced by William Fromm, who was also very talented and very skillful. He is now over at Urbana High School.

Teaching there was exciting. The kids were very different. They are different today from the way they were eleven to fourteen years ago when I started. They were much more interested, and of course being in the honors English classes, they were young and eager to go. They were like sponges, and I think I brought them a wealth of information which they might not have had from an ordinary classroom teacher, who hadn't been out of the teaching field for twenty years. I don't know, but I'd like to think that I inspired some of them to do exciting things and to go ahead whereas they might not have otherwise.

I had a very interesting time teaching at Lakeview High School. I enjoyed it. I was fortunate in being elected an officer of the Illinois State Classical Conference, and so I worked with the leaders of the state in classics. I was able to take the course in oral Latin, and the idea of teaching Latin as an oral, spoken language was very revolutionary and new, but Dick Scanlon over at the University of Illinois had a very innovative program there. I was assigned student teachers, who came in and who, I think, profited from coming. Several of them are teaching today. But this course in audio-lingual Latin was an exciting thing. I was made head of the department at Lakeview along the way, and I had some very fine young teachers, whom I hope I inspired to try new, innovative things along the way. Kids who are busy are

never in trouble. Kids who are actively thinking about what they're doing don't cause trouble. It's the idle minds which cause trouble, and it's the innovative creative teacher who is able to keep those kids interested, but each year it's a little harder than the year before. There is a great difference in the high school students today than in 1937 when I first began teaching high school youngsters. They were much more eager to learn then. Perhaps there are too many interests today, and too many time wasters. Cheer leading I have always thought was an abomination. I think it teaches the girls certain skills, but I think far too much emphasis is put upon cheer leading. Too much emphasis is put upon sports and not enough upon academic information and teaching them academic information with a great deal of academic freedom at the same time. I think there needs to be much more innovative work in education in order that students can profit from their high school and elementary experiences. Too many times the little tykes come into the first and second grades and kindergarten very excited, and all at once we turn them off. How? Are we requiring too much rote work and not enough freedom to pursue their own interests? Well, be that as it may, I found teaching exciting, and I liked doing it.

A word about salaries. I came back to teaching in 1962 at a salary of \$6320 a year with sixteen hours beyond the masters. When I retired in 1973, that salary had more than doubled, and teachers' salaries have gone up a great deal since I started teaching in 1929 at a salary of \$115 a month - far less than a week today. But I'm wondering if the teachers are accepting the responsibilities of that increased money and the monetary returns or if they are accepting it without accepting the responsibilities and demanding more without giving more of themselves. I think this is what teachers today ought

to be asking themselves. Are we giving our dollar's worth to the public schools and to the high schools and colleges or are we just turning out information for students to absorb or leave as they like? Well, be that as it may, I retired in 1973 and since then I've sometimes wondered when I had time to work. I've spent a great deal of time at the Macon County Historical Society, which I've thoroughly enjoyed. There is a cross section of people there, many of whose roots are in the land as are mind in Macon County, who have common interests, who have a great desire to preserve and to save the history of the county and make it known to the people of the county - spread the gospel, as it were. Also, I've been involved in tracing family histories of my various families. I became involved with the Decatur Genealogical Society and with the Macon County Historical Society shortly after I returned home to put down those roots to get ready for retirement. I left a glamorous life - being a buyer and being wined and dined and taken here and there and theatre tickets being provided whenever I wanted to go, and all this sort of thing, but I found life back in Austin Township more exciting perhaps than any other life that I've known - in having a garden and watching the things grow. You can take a youngster away from the farm, but you can't take the farm away from the youngster. I've had a lovely garden, which I've enjoyed here. I like working out of doors, seeing things grow and seeing the changes that are made as the seasons progress throughout the year. As I became deeper and deeper involved in genealogy, I found out a great deal about my families - James Renshaw, who was born in North Carolina in 1792 and moved over into Kentucky and from Kentucky into White County and from White County up to Shelby County and then to Macon County, where he stayed and lived out

the rest of his days. But what started out as an easy job to find out about these early ancestors has proved very difficult in some cases. Along the way, in 1968 we organized a group of the local societies in Illinois into what is known as the Illinois State Genealogical Society. Coming to a meeting late one morning, as I did, I heard them announce as I came in, "You're the new editor of the Quarterly." "Not I," I said. "I know nothing about editing a magazine and - " They said, "Sorry! You're it."

So for the eighth year - the ninth year coming up - I've edited the Illinois State Genealogical Quarterly, which has brought me into contact with a great, great many people. I've learned a great deal about the laws of Illinois concerning vital statistics, concerning the care and upkeep of cemeteries, laws that protect the privacy of people and govern the census. Censuses were taken in Illinois from 1810, although the state was not founded until 1818. They were taking census before that time, and there is a great deal of information about these early families. And so, I've done a great deal of work in that, and I've met many, many lovely people through the Illinois Genealogical Society - Dr. Robert Bone, former president of Illinois State Normal, now Illinois State University. I've had the privilege of working with Dr. Leslie Bryan, who is the head of the Aviation Department at the University of Illinois. Dr. Bryan is now retired, but a very wonderful person, as is Dr. Bone, and very influential. They have aided me and assisted me greatly in my work until today we publish - and it's all done here in my little country house - the Illinois State Genealogical Quarterly, which runs to about 270 pages a year. It has now received perhaps one of the highest

statures of state genealogical publications in the United States. It's rated among the ten best in the U. S. of genealogical publications, and more than that you can't ask. I did it with no experience. That always seems to be my lot. The only thing I think I fell down on terribly upon being put in a spot where I couldn't learn and couldn't do was when I was assigned as pianist for the orchestra - and that I couldn't do. I was given the assignment, but I fell flat on my face because I'd much rather have played tennis than play the piano. But I ran a garage, which I knew nothing about. I became a dress buyer, which I didn't want to do, and was a successful one. I learned Latin for the third time. I edited a publication, which I knew nothing about. I served as curator for the museum, and I didn't know much about that. I've taught antiques classes by brining myself up by the boot straps. I always seems to get into some job by not having sense enough to say I can't do it, and I guess that's a tendency of all Midwesterners - to think they can do more than they can and then go ahead and do it.

