

Mr. Lee D. Pigott

Interviewed by  
Miss Betty Turnell

for the  
Decatur Public Library

Childhood.....	1
Young Adult.....	2
College.....	3
Harvest crews.....	4
Military.....	8
Influenza epidemic.....	9
Millikin University.....	10

Part II

Teaching at Roosevelt Jr. High School.....	2
Gastman School Woodworking.....	3
Principal at Durfee School.....	4
Physical education.....	6
Ku Klux Klan.....	6
Truancy.....	7
Corporal punishment.....	8
School newspaper.....	8
Centennial Jr. High School.....	8
Christmas programs.....	12 15
Decatur High School.....	13

Mr. Lee D. Pigott, Interview

January 30, 1978

This is Betty Turnell speaking for the Decatur Public Library. Our guest today is Mr. Lee D. Pigott, formerly principal of Decatur High School. And I might say that the "D" stands for "Decatur" so today we are really talking to "Mr. Decatur." Well, Mr. Pigott, we're very happy to have you here. Let's begin by asking you something about your childhood.

Mr. Pigott:

Well, I was born in Murphysboro, Illinois, on July 9, 1893. My father was married three times. My mother's name was Ada Holtwick Caudle Pigott, and my father's name was Lee Decatur Pigott. There were 14 children in the family and all of them lived but one to reach man and woman-hood. The first wife was named Deeson. The second wife was named Caudle and the third wife was also named Caudle. My father's second wife and third wife were sisters. Dad by trade was a car repair man (railway cars) in the Mobile and Ohio shop in Murphysboro, Illinois. I attended the grade schools in Murphysboro until the end of my 6th grade, when I quit school to go to work in the Mobile and Ohio shop. When I was 12 years old, I worked on the ice wagon, driving two small mules and delivering very small pieces of ice, perhaps 12 to 25 pounds, and the fellow who was boss on the wagon delivering the larger ones. One day the boss on the wagon asked me to go in the saloon with him. Well, I was a little leery about doing that but I went and he ordered a stein of beer. He asked me what I wanted and I told him nothing, but he insisted that I take a small beer. Well, I said, "I guess so." The bar tender asked me if I had ever tasted beer, and I said, "Not on your life," but I had a big brother who got drunk once in a while, and Dad forbade any of us to take a drink. Well, he left and returned with a small glass of beer. The bartender told me to drink it all in one gulp if I could. Well, I tried, but it was real warm, and I had to take two or three gulps before I drank it all. I sat there on the stool for a while. My partner got the refrigerator filled with ice, and we went on our way. Before long I belched, and I thought I was going to be sick. Later on I was sick as I could be. I vomited all over the front of the wagon. I said, "No more beer for me!" And after I felt better, I was sure that that bar tender had heated that beer to make me sick. I still thank him for what he did to keep me from wanting any more beer.

While I was in the 7th grade at Logan School, a lesson taught me by my principal, Mr. Shoemaker, stayed with me for a long while. A group of us children who arrived early one morning after a light rain were playing in the school yard when the school principal arrived. There were small puddles of water on the walk and the principal was jumping over them. I saw him jumping and I yelled, "Goody, Goody! Mr. Shoemaker has to jump over the puddles."

I thought no more about it until a 7th grade teacher told me to stay after school. She told me the principal wanted to see me. I went into his room, and he told me to sit on the front seat. I did, and I waited until all the pupils were dismissed. When they had gone, the principal came to me and said, "Lee, I'm going to teach you a lesson. You had better treat your elders with respect from this day on."

Well, what had I done to deserve such a lesson?

He said, "You made fun of me this morning when I was jumping over the puddles of water."

I tried to say more, but he said, "Be quiet."

He pulled a rubber hose out of his pocket and hit me several blows across my legs. He could not make me cry because I was so taken by surprise. I just wouldn't cry. I went home and told Dad that I was ready to quit school and go to work. He asked me why and I told him and he said, "OK."

That was the end of my grade school education. In later years when I was in Murphysboro, I tried to see Mr. Shoemaker, but I could not locate him. This was a turning point in my life.

Dad secured me a job working in the bolt house of the Mobile and Ohio yards. My job was to hand out bolts to the men working on the freight cars.

I did not work long on this job, as I was transferred to the tool house in the machine shop, where I earned 10¢ an hour for a ten hour day. I liked this job because the machines tool and die man had his bench in the toolroom and he taught me many little things that were a big help to me later. From the tool room I was transferred to a very large drill press and a turning lathe, where I started on my apprenticeship as a machinist. I worked until I quit to go to school.

My first pay check at the shop was \$18. I hadn't worked quite a month.

I asked Dad how much he wanted for board and room, and he said, "whatever you want to give."

I said, "Will \$15 be enough from this check?"

"O.K.", he said.

I kept the \$3 and had most of it left when my next check came due. There was nothing in town to spend it on except the ice cream parlor and only a few boys ever went to the ice cream parlor.

At about 18 years of age, I was taking an active part in the young people's group of the Methodist Church. Dr. Cameron Harmon, the minister, took a very great interest in my future. He wanted me to go to McKendree College Academy and start on a high school diploma and then an A.B. degree. He said he would get me a small loan per semester which I could pay back after I graduated from college. He also said he would get me a job waiting on tables in the dining room for my meals, a job as janitor in one of the buildings, which would make it possible for me to get through. I told him I had not graduated from the 7th or 8th grades. What could be done about that? He said he would try to get me started on the first year of high school because of my age and if I could carry the first year of high school, that would be O.K. I told him to talk to my father. Well, he talked to Dad and Dad said "No. He's learning a machinist's trade and it would be foolish for him to leave and go now, and I will not let him go."

Well, the same thing came up the next year with Dad saying, "Absolutely not."

By this time I really wanted to go and I told Dad that I planned to go, that I had asked for a railroad pass to go to St. Louis.

He said, "Lee, if you do go, don't ever step a foot into this house again."

Miss Turnell: Mr. Pigott, how old were you at this time?

Mr. Pigott: I was 19 years old.

Miss Turnell: And McKendree College is in St. Louis?

Mr. Pigott: It's in Lebanon.

Well, I made my plans to go. Dr. Harmon made the plans for me to enter McKendree College Academy. Several of my brothers and sisters intended to go with me to the 4:00 a.m. train. Dad learned about it and said, "No, let him go alone."

Miss Turnell: That was a really difficult experience, wasn't it?

Mr. Pigott: Well, I arrived at McKendree September, 1916. I was assigned a room with Dr. Cameron Harmon's grandson, John Harmon, Jr. I did janitor work, rang the rising bell in the dorm, was head waiter in the dining room and took a very active part in athletics. My athletic awards that I won there were four awards in baseball, four in basketball, two in football, one in tennis, and one in track. Many interesting things happened when I was at McKendree, but I'll mention only three or four of them. A minister by the name of Brown who was a student at McKendree sold a freshman a textbook which had many leaves torn out. The freshman tried to get Brown to take it back and repay him the money for the book because it was no good, but Brown refused. The freshman threatened to go to the president. Brown wagered him to go, that he had the scripture to prove he was right. The freshman went to the president, who was a minister also. The president called Brown in and gave him the devil. Brown told him he could justify his action by the Bible. The president said if he could do that, he would forget it. Brown said, "I'll quote the scripture and you see if I'm correct." Then he quoted the scripture, "He was a stranger and I took him in." Brown returned the money to the freshman.

Lebanon was a small town with little in the way of entertainment for college students, with few places to take your date. But there was a small cemetery a block or two off the campus, with benches to rest our weary young bones. I was there by myself one Sunday afternoon looking over the quotations on the tombstones when I came across an odd inscription, "She was more to me than I expected." I have often wondered what life had been between that man and his wife.

Mr. Pigott continued:

The third thing was this. The college, which had been founded in 1818, the first college in Illinois, also had the oldest chapel bell in the United States. Two authoritative documents in different magazines indicated that this historic bell in the chapel at tiny McKendree College at Lebanon, Illinois, that the tones of the college bell had been heard long before the formation of the famed liberty bell, long before Columbus discovered America. (This was a quotation from the Macon News, Thursday, 1918. I found that afterwards.) I climbed up in the steeple of the chapel building and examined the bell and the clock and how the chimes were played. I shall never forget that experience.

My experience in athletics proved very valuable to me in my future college career. I remember that we defeated the Carlyle Indians football team, one of the highlights of my career in football. I really had a great time at McKendree, and I enjoyed my job as head waiter in the dining room, my work as janitor in the science building and ringing the rising bell in the boys' dormitory and the girl's dormitory. There were many, many other things I took pleasure in doing, but my school work came hard for me. My grades were very low in Greek, Latin, English, and history. What I did pass was mostly because my professors thought I tried. All this time I played football, basketball, and track. It may have been my coach who talked them into giving me passing grades to keep me on the team.

At the end of my first year at McKendree I wrote to my father and asked him if I could come home for the summer and get a job in the shop and save some money for the school. My stepmother wrote back and said Dad said, "no". I was not welcome.

That was a blow so I had to find something to do that summer to help pay for the next year's school expense. My roommate Pfeifer and I talked it over and we decided to go to Kansas and follow the wheat harvest crews through Kansas and Oklahoma. As soon as school was out, we stored our school things and went to St. Louis, caught a freight train which was headed west. We had no trouble riding on top of the freight trains because the West needed men for the harvest, and the railroad did not object to taking men out there. We got to Antoinette County, Kansas, a short time before the threshing crew arrived in the county, but we found work on the Gaither farm shocking wheat. We were both green hands, but we learned quickly and the work was hard and the hours were long. But we had a job with board and room. We bathed in the watering trough where the cows and the horses drank. The animals soon got used to us and it didn't matter much to them. On my birthday on July 9 the family had a birthday cake for me. I had not shaved since I left college in June so I celebrated and shaved before I went down to supper. The family was surprised. In fact, they did not recognize me at first. Within about ten days at Gaither's, we got a job with a threshing rig and went with them until they finished in the neighborhood. When the job ran out, my friend from school, who was with me, went home. I gave

him my watch, practically all my money to keep for me, and for him to bring it back to school in September. One of the men told me that a farmer, Mr. Jones, needed a farm hand to haul wheat to the elevator, and that he would take me there on his way home. He let me off at the lane that led to the house, and drove off. Well, I was all alone, out far from anywhere. I went to the house and knocked at the door. A woman about sixty years old, dressed in a dirty house dress opened the door and asked, "What do you want?"

I told her that I understood that Mr. Jones needed a hired hand to haul wheat to the elevator in Oklahoma.

"Yes, he does, but he's not at home."

"May I stay until he comes?"

"Yes, come in."

"No", I said, "I'll go out to the barn."

So I went out there where I wouldn't bother her with her work.

Mr. Jones arrived a short time later and gave me the job. We stayed outdoors until we were called to supper. There were seven girls and one boy in the family and myself at dinner that night, besides Mr. and Mrs. Jones. I don't recall who asked the blessing, but somebody did. When we started eating, the mother realized that there was no bread on the table. She asked the oldest daughter to get some bread. She got up from the table, got a loaf of bread, broke it off in pieces, and threw it to her mother, father, brother, etc. When she threw it my way, I was ready and caught mine.

After dinner Mr. Jones said he would take me up to my room, for me to get my suitcase. He lighted a lantern that had a broken globe which had been patched with starch and paper or some such stuff. The light came out in only one place and not much light at that. He took me upstairs to my room, but I could not see much of the room because of the poor light from the lantern. He put the lantern down on something and a sound like bees that were disturbed filled the room. He apologized about the condition of the room and said his wife would clean it up the next morning. Then he left saying no more. Well, the only thing I could do was to go to bed and sleep until morning. I put on my pajamas and as was my custom I knelt down beside the bed to say my prayers. I was about finished with my prayers when I felt something crawling on my foot. I tried to ignore it but I couldn't so I said, "Amen," got the lantern and turned the light as best I could from it and saw what I thought looked like a louse. I wondered what I should do and then decided to take the covers, sheets, and pillow cases off the bed and shake them and sleep without covers. I did shake them and I had no more trouble with lice but I could not sleep because it was so cold.

When they called me for breakfast, I said I was not hungry because I was late for the threshing. The wife said she would clean the room and get the sugar sacks out of the room so the flies would not bother. When I drove to the farm where the threshing machine was, the farmer told me my turn would not come up for a while, that his wife wanted to see before I took the first load. I drove up to the house, tied the team to the rack and walked in. I was greeted with,

"Have you had any breakfast?"

"No, I'm not hungry."

She said, "Sit down at the table while I fry some bacon and eggs and make some toast and see if I can find a cold glass of milk."

I sat down. She did find the other things and then said, "You are to come here for your dinner and no matter how late you finish in the evening you are to come here for your supper, and you are to return here for your breakfast each morning."

I asked her why she and her husband were taking such an interest in me.

She said they knew I was working in the harvest to get money to go to college and that she and her husband wanted to be sure I stayed until harvest was over.

I did stay and I did enjoy the rest of the threshing season. After the threshing was over for that season, I stayed with the Jones until I left for Illinois. The Jones' home was cleaned up, the family had prayer at meals, and I really was glad I stayed. One day which turned out to be my last day with the Jones in Oklahoma the family went to the city. I stayed behind and was to open up a field by plowing it for the spring. I was told to go to the pasture, which was 160 acres, on a certain pony and let the pony pick out 3 ponies to bring in to the barn lot.

I asked, "How am I to know which ponies to pick out?"

Mr. Jones told me to pick out a certain pony whose markings I knew and then let my pony pick out the rest.

Well, my pony did a good job picking out the other three, and I harnessed the four ponies to the plow, which had no tongue. I had the devil of a time doing it but I did. The field I started to plow was one half mile long. I asked Mr. Jones how to start the first row in order to get it straight. I followed his directions and looked down the field for an object to aim for. His instructions were to find an object, start the team, get the plow in the ground, keep my eye on the object selected, and look straight ahead, keep the team headed for the object, and I would have a straight row. Well, I did as instructed. When I got to the object I aimed for, I was

on target. Then I turned around and looked at the crookedest furrow I had ever seen. I was disgusted with myself, but by the end of the day I had a rather straight furrow. It was about quitting time when the Jones came back from town. When I finished one furrow close to the road, the oldest Jones girl waved a letter towards me and placed it on top of the mail box and put a clod of dirt on it. I decided to plow one more round and then go back to the house. I plowed the round and then drove the ponies back to the barn. I had had a devil of a time with the horses all day, but as they got tired they were less trouble. By the time I got them back to the barn, they were acting OK. Mr. Jones and his son came out to help me unharness the ponies. The boy looked at the four ponies and slapped himself on the leg and started laughing. He punched his father in the ribs and pointed to the ponies. Mr. Jones also started laughing and I got a little disgusted at the way they were acting until Mr. Jones said that three of those ponies had not been broken to harness.

Well, then I understood why I had had so much trouble with them all day.

I had read the letter the girl had left on the mail box for me and good news was in it.

"Lee, come home as soon as you can get here."

I was greeted with open arms at home by Dad and the rest of the family. I went to work immediately in the tool room of the machine shop at 10¢ per hour. Dad wanted me to stay at home when it was time for me to return to McKendree College at Lebanon, Illinois, but I knew I would go back. I returned to McKendree College in Lebanon, Illinois in September for another year. We had a new basketball coach when I returned - a Mr. Cy Gentry, who was a Rhodes scholar and who had just finished his work in England. He had a great influence on the boys in the school. He was young and youthful and good-looking, clean in every respect. When he took charge of the basketball practice, you felt you would get a fair break. I weighed 130 pounds, was 5'10" tall, and I felt I had as good a chance to make the team as anybody else and I did make it and if I did not make it, it would be my fault. We had three fellows who were over 6 feet tall. One was 6 feet six. I did make the team, and the three big fellows on the team protected me all they could. I was a fairly good shot when close to the basket. One game I made several short shots in a close game, and the opponents roughed me up too much for the big boys to take and one of the big boys picked one of the rough ones up by a leg and an arm and butted his head against the wall and that put an end to their rough tactics. At the middle of the fourth year at McKendree, Dr. Cameron Harmon was elected president of Missouri Wesleyan College at Cameron, Missouri. He asked his brother, John, Merle Collard, and myself to go with him to Missouri Wesleyan, and he would see that we were taken care of financially. We went there the next semester and were given jobs which took care of our expenses. I was asked to preach on Sunday at Catawba and Proctorville and Ludlow and another place on the circuit. I did this all the time I was at Missouri Wesleyan.

In 1918 I wanted to join the naval aviation. I talked to my chemistry teacher and my psychology teacher, and they both said they would see that I got passing grades for the semester if I left to enlist. I borrowed a motorcycle and rode to St. Joseph, Missouri, to enlist, but they were not taking any enlistments in the air force. They were to take in some the next week at Kansas City. The next week I borrowed the motorcycle again to go to Kansas City. The roads were dirt roads and they were dusty. I was not used to riding a motorcycle. I was thinking more about enlisting in the air force than I was thinking about road conditions. I turned a right angled corner and found myself lying in the dust of the road and the motorcycle lying out in the road. I was not hurt and got up and got on the cycle and away we went. I stopped at a farm house when I got close to Kansas City and asked directions how to get to the address I gave them. They wrote down the directions and just as I was leaving, they told me to watch out for the dead policemen, when I went through the park. I said, "OK", thanked them, and went on my way. When I got on my motorcycle, I asked myself, "Why should I be afraid of a dead policeman? The heck with them."

I entered a Kansas City park and found a nice paved road on which I could make good time. I turned the throttle up and everything went fine until I hit a bump in the road. I thought, "That's funny - a bump in such a good road as this." It was just a short distance until I hit another one. I decided I must be careful from now on. The mounds on the concrete were across the road all through the park. I vowed to myself I would find out what those bumps were put there for. When I got to the recruiting station, I registered and asked the lieutenant what those strips across the road were for - what they were called?

He told me they were "dead policemen" and were placed there to control the speed of the traffic.

Well, I passed the examination for the aviation mechanic and was told to await orders at my present address. I was called to Great Lakes Naval Academy.

I wrote my parents and told them I had enlisted in the naval aviation and they seemed to be pleased. John, my older brother, had been drafted and was in the army in France. Well, I waited anxiously for my call to come.

When it came, I said goodbye to the fellows in the summer school, headed by way of train to Great Lakes to be introduced to a new type of living.

I was assigned to the barracks. The training and the program went very well. I remember when we were scheduled to take the examination, given by a hard leathernecked sailor that my teacher told me he expected me to head the class in the test. Well, I did take the test - and failed it.

Boy, did that teacher tell me! What a dirty trick to play - that naval officer scared me so badly that I hardly knew what I was doing. The teacher said he would get me for letting him down and I thought later he might have done it. I'll tell you about that soon.

Well, things went along well in our training. Our group and another in the camp were sent to Winnetka to build an outdoor seating arrangement for an outdoor theatre. We liked the job because it gave us a lot of freedom. I do not recall how long it took us, but about the time we finished the outdoor theatre job, the influenza epidemic of 1918 hit the Great Lakes. The camp as a group did not take the flu seriously, but as the number of cases grew and the sick bay would not take care of them, one large sleeping quarter building was filled with cots for the sick. As I remember, two of the buildings were filled with cots for the sick. The doctors were short of help to keep the place clean. Men who seemed to be immune to the flu were chosen to do the janitor work and to carry out the dead. I was chosen to do the work. I wondered if my officer chose me because I let him down on the test. I thought it over for a while and decided no one would do a dirty trick like that.

After that the flu was so bad that those who could not withstand the germ had to do the work. I hope we do not have to go through anything like that again - but we do not know what life has for us in the future.

After the flu was over, we went back to work on planes. We were not interested in the work anymore because the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. We were interested in going home.

The day before Christmas our company was sent out on a working party for the day. That night, Harry Wills, a neighbor boy from our home town, visited me and urged me to go to the big parade to be held in the main camp the next day. I told him we had been assigned a working party. To make the story short, I told him I could cut working party and visit him, which I did the next day. When I returned to the barracks that evening after the parade, there was no one there.

I waited there an hour or so when an officer came in. I asked, "Where's my company?"

He said, "Get your sea bag and follow me," which I did. Finally, I found out that my company was discharged on Christmas day, 1918. I was assigned duty to haul snow in a wheelbarrow from the camp to a ravine from Christmas day to January 1, 1919, when I was discharged early in the morning. I caught a passenger train at 11 a.m. for Decatur and arrived in Decatur at 3:20 p.m. January 1, 1919.

My girl friend, Jessie Crowder, met me at the train. I had known her when I was in McKendree College while I was in school there. She invited me home to have dinner and her folks invited me to stay with them until I found a job. I thanked them and accepted their invitation because I knew no one else in Decatur. The next day I heard of a position with the railroad YMCA. I visited the YMCA office, applied for the job, and gave them the experience I had had in Cameron, Missouri, and he said for me to come back the next day. In the meantime he would telephone Cameron, Missouri, for my recommendations

from the Cameron YMCA. I applied for the job at the Pines Community Center which was run by the railroad YMCA. The next day when I returned he told me he would recommend me to the YMCA board as soon as he could get them to meet.

I returned every day for a week or so and each time he told me the job was mine but I could not start until the board approved it.

I told him I was running out of money and would try for another job in the city. I tried the Wabash Shop, the A. E. Staley manufacturing company and others with no luck.

One afternoon I walked to the Millikin University gym to watch them practice basketball. I sat on the bleachers and watched them practice for a while. One fellow practicing walked over and yelled up to me and said, "Aren't you one of the McKendree College players who played here in the Little 19 Basketball Tournament?"

I nodded I was and he came and talked basketball for a while and asked me what I was going to do. I told him I was looking for a job. He asked me why I didn't come to school here and play basketball. I told him I didn't have any money. He said, "That's easy. I can call the coach and you can talk to him about an athletic scholarship."

We talked to Dr. Taylor <sup>Paul A. Taylor</sup> and I started school the second semester of 1918-1919.

I started to school in the third college since I left home and I was able to stay in school through the kindness and understanding of the college teachers and the administration. I had some trouble transcribing my credits from McKendree and Missouri Wesleyan to attend Millikin University, but Millikin straightened it all out for me so I entered in good standing.

My first big job at Millikin was to tile the quarter mile cinder track so the water would run out of the file on Oakwood Street. I remember that the price per foot was very good besides, I became acquainted with Mr. Carl Head and Professor L. M. Cole. Both of the men were valuable boosters for me and a friend in need. I recall going through the school machine shop one day when some of the boys were having trouble trying to bolt a complicated piece of machinery on the bed of the planer and they couldn't get it done. I worked with them and we got it set in place. I said, "check it over and I'll go on to the wood shop."

Mr. Cole was standing behind me, and he said, "Good job, Lee! Where did you learn to do that?"

I told him of my work in the machine shop at home.

All he said was, "Good! Let's go to the woodshop."

Interview of Mr. Lee D. Pigott

Part II

Mr. Pigott:

While at Millikin I had made the basketball team - at James Millikin University but I did not earn a letter because we played Wesleyan University. When my name was announced over the P.A. system in the line-up, the Wesleyan coach objected to my playing because I had played at McKendree College. The Millikin coach was new, and he didn't have the nerve to put up a fight for me. I was eligible because a player at that time could play when he was in the academy four years and when he was in college four years. Well, that was just one little thing. I went on, did my work in college and while I was in school I married Miss Elizabeth Crowder before school was out and lived with her and her parents until I graduated.

I was able to get my father to come to my graduation, but he was not comfortable out of Jackson County. I drove him back to Murphysboro and I remarked what good crops we had. His remarks were always, "Not as good as Jackson County."

When we finally drove into Jackson County, he was a different and a happier man. When I was in college, I sent home two pairs of boxing gloves for my brothers and a large college warm-up sweater. Dad wore the sweater most of the time until it was in shreds. He seemed never to tire of telling of my activities in athletics while in college. Each time he told about my athletic ability, the stories grew larger and larger.

As a senior at JMU, I did some advanced work in cabinet making. My wife wanted me to make a davenport table for our living room. I made it and one of my grand children has it now. Mr. Cole asked me what I was going to do after I graduated. I told him I had no idea. He said I should apply for a teaching job in Decatur. I told him emphatically no, that Decatur would not take a person just out of college without any teaching experience. Mr. Cole kept after me to apply to Superintendent Engleman for a job in industrial education. I made an appointment with the Superintendent of Schools at 3 p.m. on Friday as Mr. Cole urged. On Friday I went to the Superintendent's office to fill the appointment. Miss Hoffer, his secretary, said he could not see me that day because he had to go to Chicago on the Banner Blue at 3:20. I told her that was all right, but would she please tell Mr. Engleman I was there so he would not think I did not keep my appointment. She went in and came out immediately and told me to go in to see the superintendent for just a minute. I went in, introduced myself, and before I could say anything else, Mr. Engleman said, "Mr. Pigott, I'll send you a contract Monday to teach machine shop in the new Roosevelt Junior High School for \$1500 a year." Well, it finally dawned on me that Mr. Cole had talked to Mr. Engleman and asked him to give me a contract. Several years later I had the privilege of giving the dedicatory speech of a painting of Mr. Cole before the Alumni Association Banquet held in the Masonic Temple. The painting now is on exhibit in the hall at JM University.

My school life at JMU was not very thrilling except when I was making progress towards a college degree. Of course, I wondered what I would do after college, but my ambition was to graduate and be the first in the family to do so, and give my brothers and sisters a desire to follow in my footsteps. I am sorry to say that out of 14 children only two others earned a college degree. Dad would not have stood in their way as he did in mine, but only two had the determination to finish college.

I graduated from James Millikin University in June, 1921, with a contract for teaching position in the fall in Decatur.

Well, I had to get a job for the summer. Our next door neighbor, at 553 South Seigel, was a Mr. Wilmuth, was a carpenter belonging to the Carpenters' Union. I asked him if he would help me get a job. He said, "They need carpenters at Pekin, where they are re-building the starch factory which had burned down." I told him that I didn't belong to the Union. He said to come to the next union meeting and he said he would see what could be done. I went to the meeting on the night designated. The chairman of the Union sent a committee out to see him and give me an oral examination. I passed the examination all but chalking a line, which I failed. The Union gave me a union card, dues paid up for one year. Mrs. Pigott's folks had moved to Peoria to live so we made plans to live with them for the summer. I went to Pekin and talked to the foreman about a job. He asked me if I was a good carpenter. I said, "No, I am not, but I can saw to a line, drive nails straight, and give an honest day's work." He asked if I had my tools with me. I told him I did. He gave me a slip and told me to report the next morning at 7 a.m.

Well, on this job we built from the top floor down to the first floor, and on this job I saw my first man fired. We were building from the 4th floor down, trying to line up the top floor with what would be the bottom floor when we finished. Well, we put a line down from our frames to the sills below and lined it up that way. The line was out about 3 inches. I said, "That will never do." But the fellow said, "Oh, the Hell with it. It's all right." Well, the boss was right behind him. He just pulled out his little pad, wrote out a slip, and said, "Go to the office and get your time."

I worked at the Pekin Starch works until the Saturday before Labor Day, September, 1921. We went back to Decatur and moved to the 400 block Powers Lane to the Davidson home.

When school started, I reported to Roosevelt Jr. High School the day before school.

Mr. C. F. Carmichael was the principal. I talked to him at school, and he took me to the shop to see where I was to work. He showed me the wood shop, the tin shop, the blacksmith shop, the electric shop. Everything was new, and the shops looked very inviting. When he was through, I asked him where the machine shop was. I had a contract to teach there. He told me they did not have a machine shop, that I was to teach sheet and metal. I told him "no, not me." I was employed to teach machine shop. He said there was no difference between the two. I said, "If you don't know the difference, I can't explain it to you."

I went to the public school office and told the new superintendent about my problem. He told me that they had an opening to teach 7th and 8th grade woodworking at Gastman School basement. Well, arrangements were made for several of the 7th grades to go to Gastman for manual training. I also went to Durfee School to teach 7th and 8th grades manual training and the 7th grades from Ulrich and Warren Schools. I was asked to teach a class of ungraded boys who were far behind the sixth grade level. I had tried to get these boys interested in the same project with no luck. I went to high school and asked if they had anything we could clean up for them. The principal and I looked around, and we found some science tables that needed attention. I asked that two or three of the tables be delivered to the Gastman School basement. The ungraded boys, some of them old enough to be seniors in high school, were told that we were chosen to clean the tables from the high school science classes. We talked about whether we would be able to do the job or not. I told them I thought we could because they had the guts to stick to the job. We discussed how hard the task would be and the reward would be that we would return the tables to the high school with some identification that we had done the work. After the class discussion, we voted on whether to try to do the job. The vote was unanimously "yes". We then went to the high school, picked out the tables, and had three of them sent to us. Well, we worked on those tables off and on for about a semester. When we finished them, they really looked very good. If you think it's easy to use hand tools to take off varnish, to use a plane on a table, and cut and so forth, then try it some time. You'll see that it's not very easy.

Teaching boys from French, Dennis, Oakland, Lincoln who came to Gastman once a week was very interesting. One group of boys who shined shoes at the shoe shining parlor on Water Street were very lively and interesting. After the first few months of school, I could not walk past their place of business without getting a free shoe shine. The class - the 7th grade from Warren and Ulrich and the 7th and 8th grades of boys from Durfee had their classes at Durfee. The Durfee School group had the bad reputation among the grade schools. Durfee was the only elementary school that had a father's club. I heard very little from the mothers or father's clubs although I did go to the father's club once or twice. I did not have an automobile when I started teaching, and I used the street cars. We lived on Power's Lane, and I could walk to the transfer house, which was located at the crossing of North Main and East Main Streets. The street cars went around the Transfer House and back the way they came.

At the end of the first year of teaching manual training, I worked for the Decatur school system, refinishing desks and painting classroom walls. The painting crew painted all the rooms in the old west building. We dipped the children's desks in a large container of hot varnish remover, let them stay in there until the varnish started to fall off, then we took them out and brushed off the remaining varnish. I do not remember how much we were paid for this. I worked all summer and made enough to add to my \$1500 salary to make a fairly good living.

Some time at the end of the summer I was called to the public school office for a conference with Miss Imboden, the elementary supervisor, I had no idea why she wanted to see me. In fact, I hardly knew her when I saw her. When I met her in the office, we visited for a while and talked about Durfee and the other schools who sent pupils to me at Gastman and Durfee. Out of a clear sky she said, "Mr. Pigott, you have just been appointed principal of Durfee School."

Well, to say the least, I was surprised. I said, "I'm not prepared to be the supervising principal of a big school like Durfee."

"Well," she said, "We need a man to be the principal of Durfee to handle the discipline, and you are the only man in the elementary schools who has a college degree."

She said, "We will help you get started, and the teachers will help you when you need help."

Of course, I was glad to get the position, and I told her I would do my best. If my best was not good enough, to tell me and I would turn in my keys to the office.

I asked when I could get the keys to check on the organization. She told me the organization was all taken care of, and I could get my keys the day we had the first teachers' meeting. I did not remember what my first principal's salary was, but it was more than \$1500. I remember the starting teacher's salary was in 1940-\$1325.

Well, the first day of school opened in Durfee School on Labor Day, 1922. I was very nervous. I secured the keys from the public school office and opened the door at 12:30 p.m. for the teachers to come in. All other doors were closed. I went to the principal's office, unlocked his desk and looked for the plan of organization. I was surprised to find all the papers for the pupils' assignments thrown in the drawer in a mess. I did not know what to do. In fact, I knew so little of the school records that I was lost. Well, the question was, "What should I or could I do?"

The teachers were coming in for their keys and their rooms. I said, "Wait until after our meeting." They looked blankly at me and went to the auditorium for the meeting. I finally decided to tell them the whole truth about my appointment and my statement to Miss Imboden and wait for their criticism.

When I told them I knew little or nothing about a supervising principal and what he should do, that I was at their mercy. There were over 600 pupils coming in about an hour, and I did not know whose rooms they belonged in. Much to my surprise, they just laughed. Then they quieted down and started giving suggestions. I did not know that the principal had been fired. He had evidently mixed things up.

Their plan was to have the teachers at the top of the stairway leading into the building and to tell the pupils to go to their last year's classrooms and the new pupils to the auditorium. The teachers in the sixth grade would help if needed. After all the pupils were in the building, the teachers who had them last year who were passed, at the ringing of the bell, would send her pupils to the next teacher and keep those who failed. Since we had only one new teacher in the first grade, the new first graders could go to one of the two first grade rooms. It worked out fairly well, and we all breathed a sigh of relief. I complimented the teachers and thanked them for solving the organization problem. This incident taught me to ask teachers for help in running the school. They gave me many suggestions, some of them very valuable educationally. This year, the first year, we were assigned a band instructor for the school. I do not recall the number of band members, but we felt that Durfee School was fortunate to have band music. It made us hold our heads a little higher, because at that time some thought, "Can any good thing come out of Durfee?"

Miss Campbell and Miss Consello asked if their primary grades could have an Armistice Day assembly program.

"Of course, I said, "Of course you may. But can't we have it for the whole school?"

Well, the teachers trained the others, and it was sure to be a success, because it seemed as if the whole school was getting excited about it. A few days before the program, a committee of teachers waited on me and asked me to lead the school in the pledge of allegiance to the flag from the stage.

"Well, of course I will if you wish me to do it." I said.

"Well, that's not all there is to it. We want you to wear your Naval aviation uniform."

"I said, "Oh, I'd rather not. I feel as if I'd be trying to push my world war record before the children."

To make the story short, I did lead the pledge of allegiance in a trembly voice, and my eyes were full of tears as I stood at attention while the bugle sounded. The little children were very much impressed.

There were many good things that happened at Durfee. The teachers were almost unanimous in their efforts to help the children. Many of the parents had gone through a long Wabash Railroad Strike and they were thankful for the little things at school.

Because of my knowledge of conditions of the East end of town, I was asked to head the drive to get presents for the Christmas store to help children in the northeast part of Decatur. We solicited items from stores and repaired broken

toys at different places. I do not know whether this was the beginning of repairing of toys by the firemen or not. A day or so before Christmas when families were chosen, the children were taken through the store and given a choice of a number of gifts they wanted.

To get back to the classroom, <sup>Hannah B. Smith</sup> Miss ~~Cavers~~, now Mrs. Emanuel Rosenberg, was our first physical education supervisor. She planned the physical education class work in the Decatur Public Schools. A performance was held in Fairview Park in the spring of 1922. All grade schools under her supervision in P. E. classes assembled in Fairview Park on Saturday afternoon and gave their review. The pupils went to the park by streetcar, bicycles, buggies, and many walked. Pupils who went to the park from Durfee got on the cars at Durfee, went south to Condit to Water Street, to East Main, West from the Transfer House on Main, and one block west on Park Street to North William and to Fairview Park. The exhibition was a great success.

We had need of a special teacher in teaching reading to a few pupils each hour from the primary grades. We were able to get Miss Thursta Lux who was a Palmer Method Penmanship teacher to teach classes full time at Durfee. At this time we were having a special arithmetic test in the first six grades in all elementary schools in the system. All schools were told the test would be given on a given date. I called the teachers to a meeting and urged them to put special emphasis on the fundamentals of mathematics. We wanted to do well on the test. The school almost had the name, "Can any good thing come out of Durfee?"

The test came and turned in at the public school office for grading. We did very well. Three of the schools, which were supposed to do the best, all fell below Durfee by several grade levels. One principal went to the superintendent and wanted him to look into the method of giving the test, but he refused to do so.

I had a janitorial problem also which was unusual. Some of the teachers complained to me about his sweeping and asked me to check it. I did so and thought he was doing a good job, nothing wrong with it.

But a teacher still complained.

"You will have to tell me and show me what's wrong." I said.

She was afraid to tell me because he was a member of the Klu Klux Klan.

I told her that was his business but his work was our business.

"Well, I'll tell you if you won't tell him who told you."

"I won't unless I have to."

"Well, he chews tobacco and spits on the floor ahead of the sweeping compound and does it all the time."

"I'll take care of that," I told her.

I went to the janitor and told him about chewing tobacco and spitting on the floor. I must have talked to him at the wrong time because he told me there was nothing wrong with doing that, and that it was his personal affair. I told him to discontinue it. I thought he would think it over and quit it and I would check with him later.

The next day the minister of the 3rd UB Church, <sup>3/21</sup> Oke Summers - came over and talked to me about the case. The janitor had taken the case to the Ku Klux Klan and trouble was headed my way if I did anything to him for spitting on the floor. I said, "Pastor, I cannot have him doing it anymore. Right is right and wrong is wrong." I was young enough to tell the Ku Klux Klan, "I'll run the school and you run the Klan. The next time he spits on the floor intentionally, I will take his keys."

And I did. I took the keys to the public school office and told them the story. I think they transferred him to another school. I did not hear anything from the Klan.

We had many discipline problems, especially with truancy. In order to help to some extent, I started a boys' club that met after school in the old office building of the Malleable Iron Company on North Jasper. The boys were not supposed to meet there but one night per week and when they had adult supervision, but some boys played there anyway. On one night, Mrs. Fedor, Henry's mother - Henry was a member of the club - called me and asked if I would find Henry for her. It was late, but I took the car and drove around the place where I thought Henry might be. I finally drove past the boys' club house, honked the horn, and Henry came out to the car. I told him his mother was worried about him. He got in the car, and I drove him to his house, let him out, saw him go in the house, and I drove home.

The next morning Henry was not at school, and I wondered why. Later in the week, I learned that when I took Henry home that night, his father took all his clothes from him and put him in the basement. The father was sure the windows were too small for him to get out so he did not worry. Well, Henry was gone the next morning. Some of his sister's clothes, which were hanging on the line were missing also. When Henry did come home it turned out that he had crawled out the window, put on his sister's clothes from the clothes line and left.

Henry turned out to be a fair student, and I think graduated from the high school.

When I went to Durfee, there was a fathers' club and a mothers' club. The fathers' club fell apart after a few years, but the mother's club became a very strong organization. They organized a milk program, a lunch program, gathered clothes for those who could not get them in any other way. Mrs. Roy Coffenbarger was a leader in this type of work.

I had many discipline problems, and corporal punishment was permitted in 1920 and 1930. I made a paddle out of quarter inch of walnut and smoothed the edges. The paddle made more noise than it did pain. I remember one boy told me his mother would whip me if I paddled him. I asked him if he had told his mother what he had been doing in class and he said yes, and that she said he did not deserve a paddling. I told him to go back to class and in the morning to bring hi mother with him to school. He agreed to do it and sure enough the next morning his mother came to school with him. She told me the boy did not deserve to be paddled. I sent the secretary down to his room to stay with the children while the teacher came to the office, and the teacher and the mother talked about the boy, his actions, his refusal to obey rules of the class to the extent the school could not carry on the work and so forth and so forth. I excused the teacher and looked at the mother and said, "What would you do if you were in my place or the teacher's place?"

She looked at me and at her boy and said, "Give me that paddle."

The mother was a big woman. She would weigh at least 250 pounds. I gave her the paddle. She told the boy to kneel down and put his head in her lap. She started to paddle and say, "You lied to me. You did not tell me the truth!"

She hit him easy at first, then she seemed to get angry and really laid it on him hard. The boy cried and wiggled almost out of her lap. She lost control of herself and hit him acorss the ribs and across the shoulders with the edge of the paddle. I was afraid she would break a rib or an arm she was swinging so wildly. I stepped in and grabbed the paddle to stop the punishment, but she wanted to go on. She kept saying, "You lied to me! You lied to me!" over and over. That was the last time I asked a parent to paddle a child at school.

Next was a school newspaper that we were asked to have. The Decatur Review invited the elementary schools to furnish material and a lay-out plan for a weekly newspaper. The school agreed to furnish material for a semester to be published on a given day each week. The Durfee school children voted to name their newspaper the Durfee Review and the issue I'm talking about was called "Durfee at a Glance." On Saturday, May 5, 1928, the picture measured 2½" x 17½" with the Durfee pupils spelling out the word "Durfee." There were several pictures in the paper, and I'll just mention a few of them. There was a school room, a maypole dance, a miniature reproduction of a fairydale playhouse, soap carving, and things of that nature. The word "Durfee" was spelled out with pupils forming the letters in a lay-out 20 yards x 76 yards. There were between 1100 and 1200 pupils in the picture and pupils from the first grade through the 9th grade. There were also 35 teachers in the background. The school had grown from the 4 room school in 1892 to a 32 room building in 1928. The picture was taken from the top of the auditorium.

The junior high school pupils in this group expected to go to their new building in 1929. About this time the new Centennial Junior High School was expected to be completed for the centennial celebration of Decatur. I was thinking whether to apply for the principalship of Centennial. I knew the principalship of the junior high school would pay more than the principalship of the grade school. The thing that made me question the move was the fact that there was such a good fellowship between myself and the faculty that I hated to

leave. Ever since the first day of school in '22 when they took over the organization and did so well in solving the problem, I was sold on them. When we had a problem after that, I checked with them and did as the majority suggested. If any teacher wanted to try an experiment with a class, we would discuss it, and what the group decided, we did. I remember one day our second grade teacher came in with a problem.

She said, "Mr. Pigott, you sent me a new pupil this morning, and I do not know what to do with him. I have only 40 desks in my room, and I have 41 pupils."

"Well," I said, "That's no problem. I'll just have the janitor put in another desk."

She looked horrified and said, "O.K." Then she said, "No, no, no!" and walked out.

I wonder what a second grade teacher would do under such circumstances now. I shudder to think about it.

In my days at Durfee the teachers were sure of a contract at the end of the school year unless I had worked with them and the teacher would not attempt to improve. I remember one exception to this. The contracts came out at the end of the year. I had recommended all the teachers. One teacher came to me and asked, after the contracts had been received, why she did not get a contract. I said to her, "I recommended you. You must be kidding. There must be a mistake."

She showed me a note from the elementary supervisor to the effect that her services would not be wanted next year. The teacher went to the supervisor, but she did not change her mind or tell her why she was dismissed.

I had only one other case like that in my 38 years of teaching.

Well, there is much more to say about Durfee, but I must move on.

### Tape 3

*J.H.S.*  
I was appointed principal of Centennial Junior High School. There was not much of a problem in choosing teachers for the junior high school. As I remember, I took all the Durfee teachers with me to Centennial Junior High School. Durfee and the junior high school had 36 teachers together the year before I went to Centennial. In 1930 and 31 Centennial opened with 17 teachers from Durfee. The fact that the teachers had been together at Durfee made it easier for us to get started and organized. One of the problems we had was that there was no manual training shop or gymnasium. The boys had to walk to sthoph regardless of the weather. If it was raining, they would wait at Centennial until it slackened. Both boys and girls had physical education at Torrence Park which was a block from the school. All other subjects were held in the building. One of the first things we did was to make plans of some kind to reward pupils who worked at their best level in school.

After several weeks of discussion in and out of faculty meetings, we finally decided to ask the P.T.A. to finance a banquet for those students who had made an average of C for the year in scholastic grades and C in conduct. We would present the plan of the pupils to the P.T.A. and they approved. They wanted to know what would happen if the teacher "had it in" for the pupil and gave him or her a lower grade. The passing grade would be an average grade of all the teachers. If they were not satisfied with the grade, they could take it up with the principal with the consent of the teacher. Needless to say, the plan tended to improve discipline in the school. The P.T.A. voted to have the banquet the next year.

Construction of Centennial gymnasium started early the second year. All of us watched its construction with a great deal of interest. School spirit increased as time passed. The Daughters of American Veterans of Civil War gave us a flag pole, and they furnished a flag the first year or so with the understanding that only the U.S. flag furnished by them be flown on the pole.

The second year in the school moved along smoothly. As we neared the end, we began to plan for the honor banquet. We had many pupils eligible for it that year, and we would have to crowd them very close together in the cafeteria. The idea proved so popular that we wondered why we had not thought of it before. On the afternoon before the honor banquet in the evening, my secretary came down to the cafeteria to tell me that the newspaper reporter wanted to talk to me.

I went to the office to answer the telephone. He asked me if I had a glossy print of myself. I told him no and asked him why he wanted it. He said, "I've just come from the board meeting of education and they have elected you principal of Woodrow Wilson Junior High School."

I told him he must be mistaken. He said, "No, I am not."

Well, I did not want to leave Centennial, but if I was appointed, I guess I had to go. I went back downstairs and helped get the tables set. I did not say anything to anyone about the phone call, although they were curious and wondered why the paper wanted a glossy print of me. Well, there were tears in my eyes as I watched the happy faces of the Centennial honor students. I had been at Centennial only two years but I thought that the school had a good start. Even today I think of Durfee and Centennial as two high spots in my life. Even though I have been made president of the Illinois Junior High School Association and have had my Master's Degree from the University of Illinois, I still felt that my training at Durfee was far superior to them. I felt and feel now, that the first day of school at Durfee when I asked the teachers to help the pupils get in the right grade in the room was the key to whatever success I had in the northeast part of town.

Well, it was true when it was announced that I was principal of Woodrow Wilson, I had many compliments and some criticism about going to Woodrow Wilson. I would soon find out that I could not treat children in the west end as I had treated them in the east end. I paid no attention to their remarks because I knew there was no use arguing.

I joined the Decatur Kiwanis Club while I was at Woodrow. R.S.W. McDavid was the first international president of Kiwanis that Decatur has ever had, and he had a child at Woodrow Wilson, and he was a member of P.T.A. The reason that Mr. McDavid was president of P.T.A. was that two women were soliciting votes for their candidate. These two women had visited me to get acquainted with the new principal. They told me their activities in the Dennis School and how they helped the principal with his problems. Well, the principal of Dennis had warned me about them. In those grades where there were more children than for one class, we divided the pupils according to their grades. If there were enough pupils for three classes, I would take those with the best grades in one class, the next best in the second class, and the remainder in the third class. I would follow this plan for the first six-week grading period, and check again to see if any pupil needed to be changed. After school started, at the end of the semester I would have the teachers and the pupils to help place them. But since I was by myself, I had to take the previous teacher's recommendation as much as possible. Well to make their wishes known, they (the two women) told me their youngsters were always placed in group one. I told them I did not recall which group their youngsters were placed in, but I would look and see. I looked and told them one of their children was placed in the third section, one in the second, and the others in group 3. The mothers thought their daughters should be placed in the first group. They did not like it and wanted me to change them. I told them that was the way the sixth grade teacher recommended and that is where they would be placed. I told them if they improved the first six weeks and wanted to be changed, I would do it. They went away very unhappy. I met the husband of one of the ladies in the street in the next few days and he told me to tell these two ladies to keep their damned noses out of my business. These two children did not want to be moved at the end of the first six weeks, and I did not move them. These two women put forth their candidate as president of the P.T.A. and that is why I asked Judge Horace W. McDavid to run as first president of the Woodrow Junior High School P.T.A.

Getting together the first faculty was not a very big problem. Three of the teachers came from Oakland Junior High School, as it was closed. Seven came from Centennial, another three were new or were transferred from other junior high schools. Anyway, we had a good faculty to start the first year.

We had the problem of getting acquainted and adjusting the clocks and the heat, as is necessary when you move into a new building. The playground was muddy, which caused a real problem, but we had a very fine janitor, who did not complain too much. We did not have an auditorium or gymnasium, which meant we could not have a football or basketball team, but we did have dreams of having them both before many years.

While we did not have a gym or auditorium, we did have a good faculty, who seem to be happy in their work. We had one large room on the third floor that was used as an assembly room. It was crowded, but we did not worry about that.

At Christmas time we could not do very much in the way of choruses or decorations, but we looked forward to the auditorium, which was constructed in 1936. My, we were proud when it was completed.

Christmas was coming, and we were looking forward to a good Christmas program, but first we had to get a stage curtain and some large candelabra. Mr. George Shannon, our manual training teacher, said he would make the 8 candelabra stands if someone would furnish the lumber. I took the money from the fund we made selling paper to the pupils. He made eight large 8 foot tall candelabra out of walnut. I hope they still have them at the school. Mr. Bates, our janitor, was a good carpenter. He and Mr. Shannon made the scenery for the play, "Why the Chimes Rang" The teachers trained the children in the speaking parts and everything was ready when we had a rehearsal in the school. The parents came that night, and the auditorium was filled to overflowing. The play was a success. I recall that Reverend Pratt of the Westminster Presbyterian Church wrote a letter of appreciation for the play and what it meant to him. The minister of the First Presbyterian Church said that such a play had no place in the schools.

That was one of several good plays we had in the auditorium during the eleven years I was there. We had a very good faculty, the Math, English, Music, industrial arts, homemaking, etc. were the best in the city. The children were fortunate to have such high quality teaching. The school work went along in the eleven years. Only one teacher was asked to leave, and that was because one of the board members did not like him. There were some odd things that happened. One young lady came in and applied for a teaching position. She had an excellent qualification, a beautiful girl. She was a former pupil from Woodrow Wilson. She started out by saying, "I do not want my mother to know I have applied."

I told her frankly that if her mother came over about the job, it would be a handicap to her. I told her, "I think I will recommend you, but I will wait to see if your mother does come over."

She got the position, and she was an inspiration to her students, and a real treat to the faculty. Another unusual incident in class happened to a very large, conscientious social studies teacher. There was a major league baseball team playing the Decatur team on a school afternoon. This boy I'm talking about was absent from school that afternoon. When he returned to school the next morning, his teacher asked where he had been and what was his excuse. Before he could answer, she said, "Now don't tell me your grandfather died!" in a sarcastic voice. That was exactly what had happened. I thought all hell would break loose, but nothing was said about it from his home. The teacher was really sick. I think another teacher took her place for a while.

The Christopher Wren tower on the building of Woodrow Wilson was a very beautiful tower on the main part. It was mentioned in the newspaper as the outstanding part of the building. One day a parent came in about some kind of complaint. We discussed this child's problem. He got mad, very angry, and among the things he said about me and the school in general was "what can you expect when the school board spends thousands of dollars on a Christopher Wren house on top of this building when there's not a damn wren in the neighborhood!"

To pass on to an assignment I was given by the honorable Charles Lee, mayor of the city of Decatur in June of 1941. I was appointed chairman of an aluminum scrap drive which LaGuardia, Director of Civilian Defense, required the governors of the states to have. Mr. Lee made the appointment. He was mayor at that time. I believe this was about the time I was appointed head of the Junior High School association.

I was called by the newspaper late in May and asked to make some comment about being appointed principal of Decatur High School. I told him I had no comment and that I knew nothing about it. To say I was surprised in no way explained my feeling. I wondered, "What happens next?"

I had not applied for my position at Durfee - Mr. Cole did that for me. I had not applied for the principalship of Durfee, for Centennial, for Woodrow Wilson and now I did not apply for the high school. I wondered what was going to happen next.

Anyway on July 1, 1943, I went to Decatur High School as principal. One of the first problems I had to face was that of the assistant principal, Mr. Nelson. He said to me I did not have the right to have the principal's job, that it was his right by length of service. I told him I agreed with him, but that I did not apply for the job and that if I was in his place I would feel the same way. He came back several times to tell me I had his job. I finally told him that if he felt that way he should go somewhere else where he could be loyal to the principal, that I intended to put him back to a teaching job if he stayed here, that I could not afford to have an assistant who was not loyal to me. He secured another place in Lyons High School near Chicago at a much better salary than he had here.

With that problem settled, I had to find another assistant principal. I chose C. S. Stiegemeier, a math teacher from Roosevelt Junior High who was a very fine capable organizer, disciplinarian, and a gentleman.

The enrollment in Decatur High School was above 2000. The high school had 82 teachers, 10 janitors and an engineer. To say the least I felt a concern about my ability to handle the job. Another thing that concerned me was that several years before my appointment another junior high school principal had been appointed and he had lasted only one year. Most of the teachers were willing to cooperated with any principal who was appointed, but some teachers who had been at the high school for a long time seemed to resent some instructions in the bulletin, and some were getting the bad habit of saying, "If you say so."

That sort of thing went on for a couple of months before I decided to say anything in the faculty meeting about what I thought was going on. There were several teachers in the high school faculty whom I had had in junior high school. Several of the department heads came to talk to me about the problem and told me not to worry, that it would all straighten itself out. Well, I did not see it that way after I saw some teachers disregarding instructions in the daily bulletin. I decided to call a building meeting. In the bulletin I said, "Important announcements. No excuses. The meeting will not be long unless you have something to bring up. Be there."

Well, the meeting came, and I did not call the roll, but I saw that the ones I wanted there were present. I told them that I realized that I was from the Junior High School, that I had taught only industrial arts in the grade school for one year, that I had been an elementary and junior high school principal for 22 years, but I had earned a masters of art degree at the University of Illinois, which was as high a degree as 98% of the faculty had. "I am saying this because I believe that some of you want to get rid of me as you did Mr. Wiedman. Now I want to give you notice that I am principal of this high school and I intend to be here a long time. You may hear a good many things about what should be done, but remember as longas I am here I intend to do my job and run the school according to the rules and regulations of the North Central Association

and the Decatur Board of Education. I wish to apologize to you for being so blunt today and beg your pardon if I have hurt your feelings. Meeting dismissed."

Well, I wondered what the reaction of the staff would be. Everything went along as usual for a while. Then some teachers came in, one or two at a time and told me the feeling of the faculty was all for me. They said if I had trouble with teachers in their department to let them know and they would talk to the teachers involved. I realized that in a faculty of 82 and a janitor staff of 10 there were bound to be some who did not like anyone in authority over them.

The former principal of the high school and the staff had done their job well, which made my job easier. Changes were being made by the superintendent which caused much concern among the teachers. Principals were required to evaluate teachers by a new method, which was called the "growth pattern". The teachers filled out a pamphlet about himself, and the principal filled one out on the teacher. When the teacher and the principal finished filling out the pamphlets, they exchanged copies. A schedule had been made out for teachers to meet with the principal and discuss what had been written. This method of teacher evaluation caused a lot of unnecessary fear on the part of the teachers. After the conference, the teacher was given the principal's copy to keep, and the principal was given the teacher's copy for his report on file. Since I had two conferences with each teacher and a staff of 82 teachers, I had 164 conferences scheduled the last part of the second semester. I made my schedule and stuck to it. I could not have extra conferences with parents, visitors, and few teachers except in emergencies. The superintendent complained that I had refused appointments with parents on very important matters. I explained that I had directed them to the assistant principal. I also said the administration had insisted we do the growth pattern. He said other schools were not having trouble making growth patterns - why should I? "Yes, that's right. Some schools have only 8 to 12 teachers while I have 82."

Well, I did fill them out for two or three years. Then the administration decided to have the teachers rated every two or three years. The growth pattern was the beginning of a new era of a course of activity in the schools.

The "Old Clothes Day" was a thing which gave the faculty headaches. About every year we said, "This is the last!"

Some of the rowdies were half-dressed and very destructive of property. Some of them jumped out the windows from the first floor, etc. We ruled at the next faculty meeting not to permit it again. All faculty members said they would stand firmly behind the faculty ruling, and they did and that was the last of the "Old Clothes Day."

Now, some of the faculty members mentioned that some schools were having counseling departments. We asked if the University of Illinois could send someone to us to tell us about the services of counseling. After we discussed it with him, I went to Superintendent Harris and asked if we might study it. He gave his consent but later he would not let us have the extra teachers for the counseling department. The faculty kept the idea alive, and we were eventually given permission to try it on a trial basis. It was not long before we had teachers with one-half class load of English or Mathematics or science or industrial education or social studies and one half counseling. Now all high schools in the city have full time counselors, one of the best moves that was ever made, I think.

We had no vocational work when I first went to the high school, except a part-time distributive education, which was held among the retail stores. One by one, after a great deal of effort we were able to add some other things. First of all, we were able to add a building trade to our vocational work. We were able to put in the Sunday newspaper rotogravure section our plans for the house. This was copied by papers all over the country. I was sent copies of rotogravure papers from Detroit and Chicago and the West. I took those to the superintendent and said, "Now here is what the other people think about it. We'd like to go ahead with it."

He said, "Well, I'll think about it." We started vocational drafting, we started vocational electricity, vocational cabinet making, vocational sheet and metal, vocational building trades classes.

We built two houses every year and sold them at a profit. The board of education sold them at a profit.

We had vocational automobile mechanics, diversified occupations, and distributive education.

We were able to introduce these vocational subjects because we got so much publicity when we started our building trade houses.

Using the building trade boys and using the profits to purchase a lot and constructing a house, the building trade classes have constructed and the Board of Education has sold 56 houses which the boys have built since they started about 1955.

Well, school settled down into a steady attitude and the teachers' attitudes improved as time went on.

One of the big events of the year was a Christmas program, which was held in the Kintner Gym. We covered the gym floor with a canvas and placed about 500 chairs on the floor. I think we could seat about 4,000 to 4,500 in the gym this way. We always had a full house for the Christmas program. Miss Elizabeth Connor was the director of the program, and we had a scene at the close of the program with Christ in the manger. I remember she had George Allen when he was a little baby, my grandson, as the Christ child. A live child kicking and waving his arms was very effective. She had a large group of angels singing in the background. The reading of the Bible was done in such a way that it was a high light. The Christmas story seemed to mean so much more than usual.

We were compelled to drop this Christmas program because the minister of the First Presbyterian church led a movement to get the Board of Education to order me to discontinue it. His idea was that the reading of the Bible in the public school and to have a manger scene was against the law. I fought it but the Board of Education said "no."

4th side of cassette:

Along toward the close of my school year, I began to think of the consequences of my forced retirement due to the fact that I was 65 years of age. I began to think of what I could do when July 1, 1959, came, and I think unconsciously I began to think back over my life in the Decatur school system - the grade school in 7th and 8th grade, the Durfee School principalship,

the Junior High Schools - Centennial and Woodrow Wilson, and Decatur Senior High School. Naturally, many of the little things came to mind - as when I led the pledge of allegiance to the flag in my naval aviation uniform and looked into the young faces of the primary grades of the first graders at Durfee School. I also thought of the first banquet we had at Centennial Junior High School to give the youngsters an incentive to have more interest in their work. The telephone calls from the newspaper reporter telling me I was appointed principal at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School - the Christmas program at Woodrow Wilson - and the football and basketball games at the high school and the changes for improving the curriculum at the high school. Also, I thought of my personal life in Decatur. I had married a wonderful young lady by the name of Jessie Crowder and we had a daughter by the name of Elizabeth Lee Pigott. My wife passed away while I was principal of Decatur High - that was a trying time for me, and I had to keep house for myself and my father-in-law, Mr. George M. Crowder, a fine gentleman who lived to be 101, one month, and one day. I was alone for two years after the death of my wife. Mr. Crowder moved to Miami, Florida, to be with my son.

I had the feeling that there were some things that were better because I had been this way as a great part of my life. I knew the Pigott football field would be sold and plotted into building lots or added to Johns Hill Junior High School for an athletic field, but I thought I would be remembered at my death by some of the pupils and the students I had when I was in school.

The highest highlight I had while I was principal of D.H.S. was the honor bestowed on me by Mrs. Ruth Carson, an English teacher and counselor in high school, who honored me by being my wife. She also gave me a daughter and four of the finest grand-daughters anyone could possibly have.

About a week before school was out, I was sitting at my desk in my private office when the telephone light lighted. I picked up the telephone, and the secretary said, "Long distance, Mr. Pigott."

I picked up the phone and said, "hello". And the answer was, "This is Dr. Lloyd Trump of the Ford Foundation. May I see you in the morning about 9 o'clock?"

"Sure," I said, "but what about?"

"I'll see you tomorrow. OK?"

"OK." I wondered what he wanted, but I had to wait.

The next morning he walked into the office and we visited awhile and talked the Illinois Secondary School Principal's association. I happened to be president in 1959. They wanted me to talk to groups over the United States on staff utilization.

I said, "Of course, but why me?"

"Because what you have done with the staff here in Decatur and what you did in summer school at Colorado University on staff utilization."

The Ford Foundation office would make my schedule, send me my plane tickets, expense money, would tell me when and where I was scheduled to go.

I went to some places on the East coast and some on the West. I would be on a half-time basis, and my salary would be much more than half of my present salary.

My first assignment was a teacher's institute at Lansing, Michigan. I was scared from the time I got the assignment. I went to Lansing the night before to get an idea of the procedure. Well, one of the high school principals came to the hotel to visit me. I had a short talk with him about the situation and then he left. I thought, "Why worry? If he can hold a position here all the time, I surely can talk effectively for an hour or so."

The next morning I was escorted to the platform to speak and was introduced. The audience was about 15 rows from the stage, which is usual in such audiences. I asked the man who introduced me to get a long cord for the speaker microphone so I could go down in front. He did. He introduced me and did a very good job of it.

I stood up and said, "Now please listen to this first sentence. I'm going to ask you a question. What color of eyes do I have?"

Someone in the audience said, "We can't see you very well from here."

I said, "Good."

I took the mike and walked down to the first row of seats in front of the group.

"You were correct. You could not see my eyes when I was on the stage." Then I asked "what general was it who said 'Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes?'"

Well, I had a good time, and I was sure they got my message. After Lansing I was not afraid. I was cautious until I was sure the audience was listening to what I had to say, and then I gave them my speech. I heard two women at the first talk I gave talking on the way out in a way that encouraged me.

"Why couldn't we have a fellow like him instead of a dry talk all the time?"

After the first talk I had the confidence I needed. I had agreed to stay one year with the Ford Foundation and enjoyed every moment of the time with them.

Well, time moved on, and I was getting tired and close to the end of my journey. On July 9, of this year, 1978, I will be 85 years old. I hope I can enjoy my friends and watch Decatur grow as I stand on the side lines and cheer others who are carrying on the good work in the community and look at the heavens and thank my Heavenly Father for His guidance in the past and ask again for His blessings for the future.

Mrs. Turnell: Thank you, Mr. Pigott. You have had a very exciting and inspiring life.

You have been listening to the experiences of Mr. Lee D. Pigott. This is Betty Turnell for the Decatur Public Library.