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This interview was conducted with Ruby Smith (class of 1951). The interview was conducted on June 19th, 2004 in the Viking Union as a part of the Golden Viking Reunion Weekend. The interviewer is Tamara Belts.

TB: I am sitting here with Ruby Johnson Smith who is an alumna from the class of 1951.

She's just signed the Informed Consent Agreement and we're going to proceed with an oral history. So, first could you tell me why you chose to attend Western?

RS: I'm from Bellingham. I only lived about three blocks from here, from Western. It was very convenient to come up the hill and go to Western. Plus, I wanted to be a teacher.

TB: Ok, and what were your dates, then, of attendance at Western?

RS: 1947 through 1951.

TB: Did you get any other degrees from anywhere else?

RS: Beyond that? Yes I did. I went back and got my Fifth and Sixth year while I was teaching in Edmonds. I did it with night courses and I did come up to Western, I think, and took one course. I can't remember what year it was but it was when Bill McDonald was here. He was one of my favorite people, and got my Fifth and Sixth year, yes. I actually got it from different schools because they were night courses and I was teaching at the time and had two children, so I had to work all three in, and I did it.

TB: Oh, wow. OK, what was your first job after leaving Western?

RS: I went to Edmonds and I was a second grade teacher.

TB: Where else did you teach and then also do you have any distinctive memories of your jobs?

RS: OK, I taught in Edmonds for thirty one years. My first school was Alderwood. At that time there were only three elementaries and one high school. Then, I quit for a year because I had a child, came back to Westgate Elementary because my school was closed, they tore the building down; it was one of the older ones, and started building schools in the Edmonds area because of the growth. So I came to Westgate and I stayed there until, I can't remember the year that I retired, but I taught thirty one years.

TB: Wow.

RS: I did quit one other time, too, and had a second child, but not for very long, I came back. So I taught at one school for twenty five years.

TB: Wow. Did you teach the same grade most of the time?

RS: No, I didn't. I started in second and ended in sixth. So I really taught second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth, and I taught sixth about ten years.

TB: Ok, have any other family members attended Western?

RS: No. I wanted them too!

TB: Oh, good, good.

RS: But, I wanted them to choose too.

TB: Right, right. And are there any other personal achievements you would like us to know about; awards, citations, personal bests, any special awards you got in your career?

RS: Well, one thing, and I didn't end up doing it, but I had a chance to go on an exchange program to Australia and teach for a year. It's through the State Department and I did get elected to go but I changed my mind. My husband at that time, who also went to this school, was retired and there was a big fire in Australia going on at that time, therefore the school that I was supposed to go to, I couldn't, so that meant we were way out and I was thinking of him while I was teaching, 'what was he going to do?' So I turned it down. Which probably I shouldn't have but I did.

TB: Now tell us a little about your experiences at Western. Where did you live? At home most of the time or did you ...?

RS: Yes, I did live at home.

TB: Any favorite memories of that time? I know that you got very involved with social activities at Western.

RS: Yes, I did and I loved every one of them, so much. It was fun. Being AWS President was a wonderful experience.

TB: Ok, and then your advisor on that was Miss Pabst?

RS: Miss Powell, she was not married, whom I kept in contact with until she passed away. She moved to California after she retired. I liked her very, very much. We bonded real well together. And then, I guess I was Princess one year and I enjoyed that experience. I was in the *Who's Who* and I enjoyed that experience. I don't remember all the other things.

TB: Well, you were very involved in the Student Planning Board, Interclub Council...

RS: And Homecoming, Interclub Council. Yes, I enjoyed, enjoyed every one of those activities. I guess that's why I'm here today, still working on Western things.

TB: Alright! Alright! Who were your favorite or most influential teachers and please tell us why?

RS: I think I told you, earlier today, that Miss Elliot, who was a Campus School teacher, who I did some of my cadetting under, was very influential in helping me be a teacher like I wanted to be, also Dr. Murray, I thought he was fantastic, Miss Powell. There were numerous ones.

TB: Well, then talk a little bit more about Miss Elliot. You told me earlier this morning about how she was such a great teacher.

RS: Oh, alright. It just so happened too that one of my best friends was also cadetting at the same time, in the same room with me, which made it real nice. Miss Elliot was very, very strict, but in a way that you loved her. I mean, she made us really have lesson plans, very, very explicit type lesson plans, but as soon as we got in front of the class she took them away from us and wanted us to have it in our head, not our eyes on the paper. And basically, one of the reasons why is [that] when you're teaching, things don't follow a pattern. Some child could ask a question or some child could change your whole way of teaching that particular subject. So, it was one of my best memory lessons. I felt like when I went out I didn't have to have a lesson plan in front of me every day when I was teaching, and I didn't because you can change so quickly from one type of teaching to another.

TB: Ok, well what about Dr. Murray?

RS: He was my history teacher and he was just so interesting because he always came up with so many stories that were beyond the book, that we always remembered. He also was very personable with his students. He loved to get to know them on a personal basis too.

TB: And can you tell us a little bit more about Miss Powell? I mean, I know that she was dean of women and...

RS: Well, I guess what I want to say about her: she was a very private lady but if you worked with her she became one of your best friends and she helped me so much with AWS and Interclub Council and all the other activities that I was involved in, and I just enjoyed her telling me what to do or giving me advice or if I felt I needed to go to someone, I always went to her.

TB: That's nice, nice. Your main course of study was obviously education. I don't know what the majors were like then...

RS: Well, actually, we had to have a major and I think my major was literature. I loved physical education. I like anything to do with sports, but, at that time, there wasn't as many as there is now and so I had Physical Education as my minor, which I enjoyed because we had to teach PE in school anyway so, that was ok. I am a golfer now so, I guess, maybe that's why I'm interested in sports. Love to watch the Mariners.

TB: Ah, so you must have been involved in the Women's Recreation Association?

RS: A little bit but not on an intramural type program, just purely fun type things.

TB: Which classes did you like best and/or were the most fun?

RS: Oh my, that'd probably be my education courses. After my, you know, the freshman and the sophomore years your [taking] courses that you have to take and then when you get into your field, I would say, my education courses.

TB: OK, and what activities did you enjoy the most?

RS: I loved them all. I really did. I enjoyed every one of those activities that I was involved in.

TB: When I was a student at least on campus it seemed to me if you lived off campus it was a little bit harder to be involved, but it seems like you were involved...

RS: You have to remember that we had less students here at that time, too. It was kind of interesting experience when my class came on campus, which was '47. We were coming on when all the vets were coming back, so, I mean, there were tons of men here. But it didn't bother us, of course, it was just, there was a lot of them. And everybody got to know each other because there wasn't as many students, naturally,

at that time, so I think whether you lived on campus or off campus it didn't matter as long as you had the desire to be involved.

TB: Western changed a lot in the years you were here...

RS: Oh, yes.

TB: Lots of construction going on...

RS: Not really. Not as much as after we left.

TB: That's true but the Music-Auditorium Building...

RS: Yes, we were the first class to graduate in the new auditorium and that was nice because my husband, who also graduated from here, graduated in Old Main.

TB: Did you guys march from Old Main over to the new building, the [Music-Auditorium]?

RS: Well, I know we went back because they put bricks out in the front of the Old Main that we put our cards in. I don't remember if we marched from Old Main over or not, I don't remember that, but I do know we went over afterwards and dropped our cards in where our year [was].

TB: Do you have any other outstanding memories of your college days?

RS: I loved it. I wouldn't be here today if I didn't enjoy Western. It's a very special, very special place. Lots of my friends that are here for this weekend; that's one of the reasons I come back. It is a little harder for me now because my husband died five years ago. He was on the Foundation here at one time; so he was very active on campus too and loved Western and was involved in sports. But I just made up my mind, I wanted to continue. So I did.

TB: So have you had a strong tie with Western then, all this time since you graduated?

RS: More or less, more or less. We used to come to Homecomings and there were years, of course, when I was so busy or he was so busy we that didn't come back because we didn't have the time, with children and so forth, but now that that's in the past, it's time to do it again.

TB: Well, is there anything else I didn't ask you that you would like to comment on?

RS: No, [not] other than today, we had a very nice walk around the campus. It is beautiful. I love how they've left the grass like it was when we were here. I love your new sports, you know, the recreation center. It's lovely. We were really impressed with that. I was impressed this morning at the brunch with Dr. Morse's speech. I thought it was wonderful. I just, like it!

TB: Tell us a little bit about, though, when you were here, Dr. Haggard?

RS: Oh, he was neat. He knew every one of us by name. We'd walk down the hall and he'd say our name. He was just a very down-to-earth, strict, very strict, but that's ok, we honored that. He was also a very friendly, fun person to talk to but he knew how to run a school too.

TB: When he was strict was it in things that he said or you just, sort of knew ...

RS: Dress codes. I didn't get in any trouble so I can't say.

TB: Well, some people can just do it with a look, you know, and some people can...

RS: Yes, that's right, that's right! While we would walk down the hall and, *'Oh, here comes Dr. Haggard!'*
You know that kind of thing.

TB: Right. Ok.

RS: But it was more of a respect than fear.

TB: Ok, well...

RS: That's it?

TB: Yes ... if you don't have anything more to say.

RS: Good. No, it was just a great, great experience to be here.

TB: OK. Well, thank you very much.

RS: You're welcome.