



ATTENTION: © Copyright Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections. All materials cited must be attributed to Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections.



This interview was conducted with Harold Fisher on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, in the library on the Western Washington University campus. The interviewer is Tamara Belts. Mr. Fisher's daughter Susan Rindal is present and friend Henrietta Moseley.

**TB:** Today is Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 and I am Tamara Belts. I am here to do an oral history with Mr. Harold Fisher. Henrietta Moseley and his daughter Susan Rindal are also here and may make some comments. Our first question is how did you happen to attend the Campus School?

**HF:** I asked my mother once how we got here. Usually the professors' children were always in the Campus School and I think they tried to use some of the general public, also. I don't know how my mother ever enrolled me in the school, but I was very, very fortunate to be there, along with some of my friends. There was just a mixture of the public community that went to this school.

**TB:** Alright. Did anyone else in your family attend the Campus School and what were their names?

**HF:** My sister also attended here. She was a year behind me. Her name is Jo Ann Fisher. She and I both went Kindergarten through ninth grade.

**TB:** What is her married name?

**HF:** C. M. Jones.

**TB:** What were the years and grades of your attendance?

**HF:** My attendance at Campus School was 1931 to 1941; that would be Kindergarten through ninth grade.

**TB:** Did your family pay any fees for your attendance at Campus School?

**HF:** Not to my knowledge. That was one question I had too, whether my parents paid. I don't think they had to pay.

**TB:** No, we think it was [considered a] public school. Where did you live when you attended the Campus School and how did you get to and from school (and please share any favorite memories of this experience)?

**HF:** I lived three miles from here out on Eldridge Avenue, which is heading out toward Marine Drive. It's right on the bluff overlooking Bellingham Bay. I came to school on the street car. The street car ran out to the end of Eldridge Avenue, turned around and came back. I rode the street car from 1931 to 1938. It went all the way through town up Garden Street to Garden Terrace. That's where we unloaded. After 1938, they changed to busing.

**TB:** Did you have to make any switches on the street car or did the street car come straight up here?

**HF:** Straight through. We were lucky.

**TB:** Yes. What did you do for lunch?

**HF:** I was just thinking about that the other day. I think I always had a lunch pail. My mother always made my lunch for me. On a rare occasion I think we went through the cafeteria and got a bowl of soup or whatever. Lunch pails were what we used in those days.

**TB:** When you were going to the Campus School it was in Old Main, or how we refer to Old Main.

**HF:** Correct.

**TB:** Where was the lunch room there?

**HF:** It was on the lower floor and it was more toward the north end in a room off to the west. The cafeteria and lunch room were down there and kitchen.

**TB:** Do you remember any favorite classmates and can you name them for us?

**HF:** Yes. I've got a list somewhere of my favorite classmates. Ned Carrick, Bill Radcliff, Dick Brunswig, Jo Ann Haggard (who was the daughter of President Haggard), Clarimonde Hicks (she was the daughter of one of the professors).

**TB:** Right, Dr. Hicks.

**HF:** Yes. Phyllis Olsen, Janet Brunswig, many names.

**TB:** Those are all sounding familiar. I like that! Who were your favorite or most influential teachers?

**HF:** My favorite teachers, I think my biggest favorite was Priscilla Kinsman. She was my Kindergarten teacher; Katherine Casanova, she was my first. I had several. I think in fifth grade Evelyn Odom. She was a friend. She lived with Miss Channer. She just came from back east and she had a very peculiar language. We used to laugh about her. Van Pelt and Paul Grim, he was the ninth grade teacher. We always enjoyed him.

**TB:** Can you talk a little bit more about why you liked like Miss Kinsman? Can you think of anything specific?

**HF:** Well she was always so happy and pleasant. She was very cheerful. She always had a nice attitude about her and always had a nice smile. I kind of enjoyed her as being another mother I guess at that time.

**TB:** What about Miss Casanova?

**HF:** She was a little more strict and more formal but I remember her. She wasn't quite as pleasant to be around as Kinsman, but we enjoyed her.

**TB:** Anything about Miss Elliot?

**HF:** She lived way out on Marine Drive. I enjoyed her. I don't have any particular memories of her. I had Mildred Moffatt for the third grade. I remember one day she sent me home from school because I tossed a pencil across the room. I had to ride the street car home. Mother didn't like that! Pearl Merriman, I don't

hardly remember her. Miss Van Pelt, she was very strict but I enjoyed her. All these teachers I had, there were about nine woman teachers and they were all single. I guess at that time they couldn't be married.

**TB:** Do you remember any of your student teachers?

**HF:** I can remember one name. Sarles I think it was. It was in our PE class. I do not remember the names of any of the student teachers. We sure had many student teachers and we always had at least one or two every three times a year or so. I do not remember the names, no.

**TB:** What were your favorite subjects or classroom activities?

**HF:** We always had an activity room next to our classrooms. I remember in grade school we had to have cooking classes, sewing classes, and typing classes. I remember Mr. Ruckmick had industrial arts classes. Sam Carver used to have swimming. Miriam Snow, she was the librarian, used to have library classes. They were always interesting. I felt very fortunate to have all these extra abilities that we were subjected to.

**TB:** Excellent. I've heard about that activity room before. Was that something also that you could do if you finished your other assignments, go in and start working on your art projects?

**HF:** It was always connected right to our regular classroom. All the rooms had two rooms. I never seemed to finish my class work, but we always had hand work, hand classes. We made puppets. We made Egyptian cloth and so forth. We did all our yearbooks and writing in this particular classroom and a little bit of hand work and using tools and so forth.

**TB:** Wow. What kinds of learning materials did you mostly use? Did you use regular textbooks or materials created by your teachers?

**HF:** I cannot remember any use of textbooks. I think the information was always provided by the teachers. We did not have regular textbooks that I can remember.

**TB:** What kind of grading system was in use during your attendance (letter grades or narrative reports)?

**HF:** Most of the early report cards were all narrative. They were all written. I think later on when we got into more grades, maybe eighth or ninth grade [letter grades were used] but the earlier ones were all written out.

**TB:** Do you especially remember any creative activities such as weaving, making things, etc?

**HF:** I remember in the industrial arts once my project was making a set of skis with Mr. Ruckmick. I made little boats and so forth. I remember first or second grade I made a couple fishing boats out of pieces of wood, and some of the classes we made puppets. We had puppet shows. We did a lot of writing. Another thing, we had Miss Gragg, she was our writing teacher. She taught us penmanship. We would go round and round and round. I remember that; how to hold your pen and whatnot. I guess we had a lot of experiences.

**TB:** When you had the puppet show, did the students write the play?

**HF:** Yes.

**TB:** And you were talking about writing. Did you learn cursive from her or just printing?

**HF:** Cursive.

**TB:** You did learn cursive; a lot of people have been talking about penmanship issues! So what was it like for you to be observed so often by student teachers?

**HF:** We got very used to having the student teachers come in and observe. They would bring their little folding stools in, sit in the back of the classroom. We got very used to this, and sometimes we kind of performed for them. It didn't bother us; we were just used to that type of activity.

**TB:** Did you attend summer school at the Campus School and if so, why?

**HF:** One year I attended summer school. I was having a little bit of trouble I think in certain classes. That was the only time I attended summer school. I forget how long it was, but it was kind of interesting.

**TB:** Was it very different from the regular school year?

**HF:** Not too much.

**TB:** What-out-of-classroom activities did you engage in? What did you do at recess, lunchtime, what did you enjoy the most and what games did you play?

**HF:** There were two or three little gyms we could use. We always played games like dodge ball, intramural basketball and whatnot. I forget what grade I was in; we had dancing. I still have floor burns on my knees from the dancing class! It was mainly just physical activities. We played ball games and so forth, and the dancing.

**TB:** Did you visit the college itself, the college library, attend assemblies, sporting events or anything else at the college when you were in the Campus School (and then any special memories of that experience)?

**HF:** We always had library classes. We entered the heavy wrought iron doors. Miriam Snow was the librarian and she would always conduct the classes for us. She was later married to Mr. Mathes I guess. Up on the third floor of Old Main was an auditorium and they had a large balcony around there. As Campus School students we would always attend assemblies there that were provided for the student teachers. When they had special programs, we as students could attend along with the students. It was very interesting and I think we were real lucky to be involved in this.

**TB:** At what grade level did you enter public schools? Why did you transfer and what was the transition like for you?

**HF:** I was never in the public school. I started in Campus School in Kindergarten through ninth grade. From ninth grade I went on to high school. I was never in a public [elementary] school.

**TB:** What was it like when you went to tenth grade? Did that seem different or hard?

**HF:** It wasn't too hard a transition; a lot of my old classmates that I had gone to school with for ten years were also there. We did not have too much trouble assimilating with the rest of the public.

**TB:** Did you find that your group continued to kind of stick together?

**HF:** Pretty much so.

**TB:** Did you go to Bellingham High School then?

**HF:** Yes.

**TB:** Do you have any other thoughts about specific differences between public school and the Campus School?

**HF:** The only thing I can think is that I feel that I was very fortunate to have gone to Campus School and have all these different activities that we were involved in. I think it was much better than being in the public school where you didn't have these opportunities.

**TB:** What further education did you pursue (college, graduate or professional school)?

**HF:** After I got out of World War II I started at Western Washington College in the fall of 1946, a full one quarter, then I went to Washington State (at that time it was College) in Pullman for two years. I didn't do too well in scholastic work there so I started working at Morse's Hardware in Bellingham. My wife finally transferred over from WSC. She talked me into going back to Western, so for three more years I went back to Western and I got into education. I never wanted to be a teacher but I was a teacher for 31 years. I graduated in 1951 as a teacher. I had a [BA in Education]. I should mention too that that was the last quarter that they could allow you to have a BA and fifth year. Later on I took another year to get my principal's credentials and then I took another year to get my master's degree, so I have gone to college for a long time! Seven years!

**TB:** Were all those other degrees at Western? You got your principal's papers and your master's at Western?

**HF:** Correct.

**TB:** Excellent. If you later attended Western and majored in education, did you observe or teach in the Campus School and what was that experience like?

**HF:** I never did do any student teaching in the Campus School. I would like to have had, but I didn't. I did my student teaching at Whatcom Junior High School and Sunnyland grade school.

**TB:** How did your attendance of the Campus School influence your life and/or career?

**HF:** I would say the friends and acquaintances that I [made] and grew up with in Campus School. I still have many friends today that were in this class.

**TB:** Nice. And you are still in touch with some of your classmates?

**HF:** Yes I am. We still have just Campus School reunions.

**TB:** We have their names attached. Would you be willing to serve as a contact person for your class for the purpose of encouraging participation in the Campus School reunion planned for 2007?

**HF:** I think I had mentioned, perhaps. I don't like to get too involved but I could help out.

**TB:** And you have also provided some Campus School memorabilia, including some photographs and class work. Please share with us any favorite memories from your Campus School days and any comments about areas not covered by the questions above.

**HF:** I remember sometimes we took little walks or little hikes up on Sehome Hill. That used to be a treat, going up there and seeing the petrified log over the tunnel up there and then getting out on the campus in front of Old Main up on the old knoll. Getting on the grass was a „no-no,“ but once in a while we would do that and have a little outing out there. That was kind of interesting.

**TB:** I'm curious, I've heard a lot of people talk about how they were not supposed to be on the grass during the Haggard era, but in fact you were there before Haggard. So Dr. Fisher was really fussy about the grass, too?

**HF:** Yes. And I can remember one of the maintenance men, his name was [George] Dack, and he had little signs out every once in a while on the grass, „Keep off.“ I can still remember this.

**TB:** So where was the playground for the kids in the training school?

**HF:** It seems like most of our physical activities were in gyms. I think our playground is more in the area where the Campus School building was built. That used to be the football field. There was an old wooden grandstand out there. I think that is sometimes where we had our outside activities.

**TB:** Any other comments about anything I didn't ask?

**HF:** I think not.

**TB:** Terrific. Mr. Fisher also attended what we now call Western Washington University, so he is considered one of our Golden Vikings and we are going to also ask him those questions. Why did you choose to attend Western as a college student?

**HF:** Well for one reason, it was close to home. We lived here. It was cheaper that way. It was just kind of handy to be here. I liked smaller schools. I didn't ever want to go to the University of Washington, so Western was kind of natural. I started here right after World War II and there were not too many men there and lots of women! I enjoyed it then.

**TB:** So a lot of men didn't come back right away after the service?

**HF:** They kind of dwindled back – 1945, 1946.

**TB:** What were your dates of attendance at Western?

**HF:** My first quarter was in spring of 1946 and then later on I came back in 1948, '49, '50, somewhere around there.

**TB:** What degrees or certificates did you receive from Western?

**HF:** I had my BA in Education and then I got my fifth year and then later on I got my principal credentials and the master's degree. That was later on. But I got a BA in 1951.

**TB:** What was your first job after leaving Western and please also provide a brief employment history.

**HF:** I started interviewing right after I graduated in 1951 to maybe start teaching in the fall of '51. I started interviews all the way from Lynden in this state down to Longview [Washington]. We stopped at many, many places for interviews. I skipped Mount Vernon because I had no interest in that; it was just a wide spot in the road. But that is where I ended up in my career! After I did all my interviewing up and down the coast, I came back and a friend of mine helped me have an interview in Mount Vernon and I started there in 1951 and I spent 31 years there, until 1982.

**TB:** Wow. Have any other family members attended Western?

**HF:** I had a Mother that graduated somewhere around 1920 from Western. I had a son, Jeff Fisher, he attended in the „70s, „80s; his wife Debbie, my wife Jody, my granddaughter Jane.

**[SR]:** He graduated in 1978 or '79.

**HF:** My mother went here, I went here, my son Jeff went here, and then my granddaughter, Jane Rindal, went here a couple years ago. Its four generations of our family that attended here.

**TB:** What was your mother's name?

**HF:** Ethel Burklund.

**TB:** Are there any personal achievements you would like us to know about, such as awards, citations, decorations, personal bests of any sort? I think that kind of relates to your career.

**HF:** I didn't have any particular achievements, but I do remember one time that President Haggard invited me to perform a half-hour concert on the pipe organ in the music hall so I gave a summer concert one time on the pipe organ. I knew him personally. His daughter was in our class. That's one of my highlights I think.

**TB:** Yes, that was a nice organ because it was probably brand new.

**HF:** Yes it was.

**TB:** That is a real personal best! Where did you live most of the time while you attended Western and any favorite memories of these experiences?

**HF:** When I attended Western I started at my parents' house out on Eldridge Avenue. I lived in Bellingham until I got my BA. I lived on Forest Street and then for my principal's credentials and master's degree, I lived in Mount Vernon, Washington and drove to Bellingham.

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

**HF:** I think one of my favorite teachers was Keith Murray. He was a very interesting fellow. He always had a lot of enthusiasm. The last time I saw him was at the St. James Street Presbyterian Church for a wedding I attended. I also had one teacher, Paul Woodring, he taught classes I attended. I always had him for a class right after lunch and he had a monotone voice and he could put me to sleep! Oh boy. I shouldn't mention that!

**TB:** No, that's the good stuff! What was your main course of study?

**HF:** I started into education, into teaching, and I took some music classes. I was in the choir. I was in the orchestra one time. Don Bushell, he taught orchestra for me. I was real interested in music at that time and I can remember him well. I always enjoyed him. I think those would be my main favorite teachers. I had several.

**TB:** Which classes did you like best and/or learn the most from?

**HF:** We're talking about college now?

**TB:** Yes.

**HF:** I think maybe English class, history. I think I had Van Aver once for an [English] teacher and Hunt. I think these are just general classes I took to help prepare me for teaching.

**TB:** How did you like Van Aver?

**HF:** I didn't! [Laughter]

**TB:** I've heard two different sides of him. Obviously I don't know the man. What activities did you most enjoy, such as sports, clubs, student government? Obviously music.

**HF:** I took a little bit of intramural basketball but mainly in music. I enjoyed singing in the choir, playing in the orchestra, playing the organ. Those are my main enjoyments. I enjoyed music. That was one thing I didn't necessarily want to teach but I wanted to keep it for avocation, which I did.

**TB:** Please share with us any other outstanding memories of your college days.

**HF:** I think once in a while we would go out to Lake Whatcom. They called it "Normalstad" at that time. They had different activities. I think in PE classes we played a little golf. It was more fun to hit the balls up in the woods. We had many dances.

**TB:** And the last question is always „please take a moment to consider the impact on your life of your education and experiences at Western.“

**HF:** Well I feel that I was very fortunate to go here. I think I personally enjoyed many of the professors. A lot of them I knew by name and they knew me. I think that made a lot of difference in my education too, where they took a personal interest. I am glad to have gone here. I have good memories here, good experiences.

**TB:** Excellent. Thank you very much.