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Dorothy Sheldon interview

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Lowther: Today’s interview is with Dorothy Sheldon. Larry Lowther is the interviewer. Jean Putnam is running the equipment. Dorothy, before we get into your experience with Central could you tell us a little bit about your personal background. Your family and education, early career.

Sheldon: I came from a rural background, grew up on a farm. Reared by an aunt and uncle in Twin Falls, Idaho. Went to a country school for eight years and graduated from Twin Falls High School. Went from high school to Albion State Teacher’s College, formally Albion Normal in Southern Idaho and had my first year of teacher training. Then years past - World War II and I was a wave in the navy in World War II, an aerial gun instructor. After the war, took advantage of the G.I. Bill and got two years of college at then Utah State Agricultural College which is now Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Still in education. Still with a dream of being a teacher. After that two years, my husband took a commission in the regular army and we traveled the country and well some of the world and - until 1956 when I stayed home with our three children, Cathleen, Matt, and Sue and finished finally in 1957 my bachelor’s degree in education at the College of Idaho which is now Albertson College in Caldwell, Idaho From there went immediately into teaching in McKinley Elementary School in Boise and was not even thinking of being through with going to school. So I immediately began taking night classes and weekend classes and I hired out a housekeeper who could do the work I’d been doing for thirteen years and being a mother and a housewife and an army dependent. By 1962 after teaching fifth grade, sixth grade and junior high for five years - five and a half years, I received my master’s degree, Master of Education, and went immediately to Germany where our family joined my husband. We were there until 1965 where I taught full time one year and substituted for two years in the American School, independent schools, in Augsburg and in Stuttgart actually now an army base. Then we returned to the United States and with my master’s degree I - I might change focus and I went to my old friend from Albion days who was now State Superintendent in Idaho and asked him if he had a job in the State Department of Education. He said as a matter of fact he did. They had just signed the papers for Title I of the Elementary/Secondary Education Act, our President Johnson’s Poverty Program and it was a billion dollar program. Idaho was to receive 1.2 million dollars and I was hired as the first employee and was called the Director in the beginning. I became - from that I became the Elementary/Secondary Consultant for the state of Idaho and was involved with Title III - very heavily involved with Title III of the ESEA and many of our programs in our schools now are still have the framework at least of the old Title III. It was the introduction of computers and technology. Those were the most easily funded programs with this money. I did oh many things around the state marketing the program I guess. Idaho is a very conservative state and they were not - didn’t want any feds coming into their school district so I had to convince them that I was only representing the feds. That I really was a farm girl from Twin Falls and actually on the basis of that one school district, Wendet, Idaho down in Southern Idaho, when I sat with the Superintendent and talked to him about the Harrisons and Bill Harrison and, ‘Oh yeah they knew them,’ and, ‘oh yeah they knew that.’ Now tell me again about Title I ESEA. So I said I’ll be the one, I’ll be the only one coming in to your schools and doing any kind of evaluation for working with your teachers. Well from that, one of things that I did was attend a lot of workshops, national and state and regional. You know I put on the state ones. At one of those workshops there was - there actually was a representative, a fed, and his name was Conrad Potter and I thought, now he sounds like an educator to me. He didn’t sound like the feds because I was a little bit of the non-fed population of Idaho. Some of these people would come in. They had no notion of what our problems were in Idaho and what our good points - our good educational systems and all. Well, Con shared that with me and he had come from Alaska and he knew Alaska and saw some similarities. So some time after that I did a series of workshops to incorporate all of the districts in the state and give them an update. It was called “The Happenings,” on what we were doing in Title I. I explained the evaluation procedure and that sort of thing. I thought it would be nice to have a fed here so they could get from the national office too. So I called Washington D.C., our national office, and said I’d like to have someone come and I’d like to have Dr. Potter come. So they said, ‘Oh they were sorry, he wasn’t in our region.’ I said well that’s okay, I can do without a fed. ‘Well we’ll send someone else.’ No I want him because of him, because he’s a very personable man and he would - he would relate well with the people as we were going through the full length of Idaho. And so it wasn’t
long and I got a call and they said Dr. Potter is invited to come and he is coming out of the other region, whatever it was, in San Francisco. So Con spent two weeks out with me and he did an introductory speech and that started it and toward the end of that he said, ‘Why are you working the State Department of Education?’ He said, ‘You should go get you doctorate.’ And I said, ‘Well, I’m too old. I’m almost forty.’ And I said, ‘You can never get into the program after you’re forty and he said, ‘No they’ve changed that.’ He said, ‘Go get your doctorate.’ So I came home - I think that was in April and by that summer I was enrolled at Utah State University and then I was accepted in the doctorate program and then transferred to the University of Utah. Got my doctorate. Finished it in 1969 when I was 46. During that time, doing my doctorate, I thought what am I going to do with it now that I have it? I want to go to a University. They had hired me at the University for one year. I thought where am I going to get a job that I can work in Idaho or near Idaho and I thought and I thought and one day the chair of our department came in and threw a book on the table, a thick book, in 1969, a book of openings every place. Just desperate for professors at the University. Lots of money and, of course, the thing that was going on in our society was the Vietnam War and our colleges were bursting at the seams with students. I was thumbing through it and I actually - the name I saw, Conrad Potter. I thought I wonder if he remembers me. I remember him. I wonder if he - well he’s at Central Washington. Well that’s the college that he called when we were in Moscow during our last workshop back in 19 whenever it was ‘66, ‘67 I guess. He said that he was going to - he said, ‘While we’re up here I need to make a telephone call.’ He said, ‘I was interviewed for a position at a college over in Central Washington,’ and he said, ‘in Ellensburg,’ and he said, ‘I’m going to call and see if they given me the position.’ And so he did. He called and ‘Yeah, you’re hired.’ The hiring procedure was very different. So he took us all out to dinner and of course, you know, being a fed we expected that he should - he should take us out to dinner being that we were in the State Department of Education. So we all went out to dinner to celebrate his coming to this little college, this state college - this little college over in the central part of Washington and he said, ‘Now I, you know Con being the young one in this but I’ll tell you the real story of Con.’ He said, ‘I got exactly what I want. I said I want to choose my secretary and she’s mine alone. I will not share her with anyone else. I am to have a private office.’ And he said, ‘I want tenure.’ And he said, ‘I got it.’ And I think we thought big deal. (laughs) We all had secretaries and they were ours alone and that sort of thing but he thought that he had made a very good bargain with Central which I’m sure as it turned out that he did. So, when I saw his name in this book at Central Washington University. I ran down - they had openings probably a page of openings at Central. I called and I started by introducing myself and he said, ‘I remember you Dorothy, of course.’ He said, ‘How could I ever forget Idaho,’ and all of this stuff. And he said, ‘You bet we have an opening for you,’ but he said - what I did I said I would like to apply for the position. It’s the one that Jack Purcell had. I don’t remember what they call it. Institutional

Lowther: Research.

Sheldon: Institutional research because I had done a good deal in administration and I felt that if I was in research and mathematics or anything that had to do with that kind of stuff always intrigued me. So he said - he said, ‘That job is open,’ but he said that there is another job that I would rather offer you. And he said, ‘I can’t do anything until I hear from the person who is the director and he’s out of town. Well here’s another little aside. Gustafson, Ralph Gustafson, was the director and he was in Seattle and when I saw him after that I said, ‘Gus why were you in Seattle? Were you at a teaching center that day.’ He said, ‘No, I was getting my Mercedes.’ (laughs)

Lowther: He loved cars too.

Lawrence: So that’s another little side light that I’ve always remembered about Ralph Gustafson. Well, I was standing by the telephone in Fort Douglas. Had just hung up from Con saying I’ll have Dr. Gustafson call you as soon as he comes back and my husband came in from where he was stationed down in Dugway. So we were talking and I told him that I had made this call to Central Washington University and the phone rang. I picked it up. ‘This is Ralph Gustafson.’ Con had called him from - and had said something like don’t let her get away because she has just the qualifications we need to open that teaching center over in Clover Park. He said she’s military, she’s taught military schools and we have five schools on the military reservation in that district. So he made arrangements for me to come up and I was - I was getting ready to - just at the ending of my dissertation. So we drove up, interviewed with Con and Ralph Gustafson took me
over to where I would be stationed and John Green was the dean and they had us for dinner. I found everyone very friendly and very personable.

Where I was to be working - opening this teaching center, I would have my office in the office adjoining the Superintendent. It was a new experience for the university and for everyone because we were offering - this was our first students in special education.

Lowther: Will you tell me again just what your assignment was?

Sheldon: Okay, it was called in those days Director of the Teaching Center and I was the director and basically I was supervising student teaching but this was - it was - I was in the beginning of the concept of our teaching centers and at that time we had in 1969 I believe we had 23 supervisors and - out in the teaching center and I was alone in - and opened Clover Park and everything we were kind of starting from scratch. I had supervised student teachers both at the College of Idaho and at the University of Utah and we didn’t - none of us had had training experience in special education so - and I had students who were –

Lowther: Did you have exclusively special ed.?

Sheldon: No but that was the big thing. That was the focus of the Clover Park Teaching Center. I had them at the Child Study - Child Study and Treatment Center at Western State Hospital a number of them there and a number at American Lake South and then the rest of them were a number of regular elementary/secondary students.

So I began immediately to get acquainted with the district and all and I –

Lowther: What was your impression of their training as that of a student teacher?

Sheldon: Oh it was excellent. Yeah it was excellent and it was so different. See they had taken classes in Behavioral Management and I’ll say this for the record at the University of Utah I went through my 5th Educational Psychology. I had started well before Dewey, in my first - my first psychology class was pre-Dewey. I can’t remember when that was, I think 1941. Then went through it, you know, Dewey and Thorndike and all of the things and by the time I got to the University of Utah it was Behavioral Modification and it was - I blocked it out - what’s his name? The psychologist who - from Harvard? I can’t think of it now. And I was absolutely opposed to it. We had worked for thirty years to get kids out of their seats and give them freedom and now we were getting them back in the seats. When the alarm went off everybody who was sitting in his or her seat got an M&M. I said I think this is the worst thing I have ever heard of and our final exams were using Peanuts cartoons to tell who’s getting reinforcement and who - negative reinforcement/positive reinforcement all of these things and I said that is in opposition of everything I believe about teaching. And I got a C in the course. And I had done my best and I couldn’t have a C in my doctoral program. It was the first C I think I ever got. Certainly in graduate school. I think I
got a C in my undergraduate. So I went to the professor and I said what can I do. And he said, ‘You can do an individual study and if you get an A in it then we’ll average the two and I’ll give you a B.’ So that’s what I did which was an interesting thing. But I had gone through all of this psychology and the one that I opposed is the very one that all of the special ed. students had. So I examined it and I thought now this is what it was intended for. It was intended for people with disabilities, with learning disabilities, with physical disabilities because it was wonderful. We had children just unbelievably disabled, emotionally, physically, intellectually and by rewarding them for tiny steps initially they took bigger and bigger steps. It was like miracles happening every day and our school was well prepared. Don, Don, Don, Don? Who’s the one who started our Special Ed. program?

Lowther: Oh, his last name was Don.

Sheldon: Well, okay. I’ll have to come to it.

Lowther: No, Dohn Miller.

Sheldon: Dohn Miller. That’s right. Dohn Miller. He was doing it all basically. I can’t remember. There may have been - there may have been two people, maybe three people in Special Ed. faculty at that time. Sam Rust came shortly after that and Dale LeFevre, Glen Madsen but originally it was Dohn Miller. So that was my experience and from the - my training at the University of Utah, I brought probably what turned out to be the most significant thing for me in my teaching at Central was creative teaching and creativity. I had been introduced to it through ?, a professor at the University of Utah to a course so I immediately wrote a course in creative teaching and began teaching it in winter quarter of 1970 and –

Lowther: While you were in the center over there?

Sheldon: Yes, I taught through Continuing Ed. Those were in the good old days when you - your - what you got in the money was determined on how many students you had in your classes and I had full classes every quarter. It was a time when teachers were craving something that let them be free. They still had to stay within the bounds but they were - were helped, encouraged to be creative in whatever they did whether it was behavior modification or not. So I really began then my work in creativity. And that really brings us up to about 1974 when I left the teaching center and was asked to come to Central to open Kittitas Valley because it had been closed for many years to student teaching. So my next assignment was right next door to Mary Schroeder.

Lowther: He was the Superintendent of Schools?

Sheldon: The Superintendent of Schools.

Lowther: So you were still supervising student teachers but in the Kittitas Valley?

Sheldon: Now it was in the Kittitas Valley. Dr. Azella Taylor had joined me in 1972 so for two years she and I supervised because the district was growing and we were - we really had a lot of special ed. students. Lowther: Did you spend most of your career supervising student teachers?

Sheldon: I - probably so. I haven’t really figured the actual months but I was five years in Clover Park and then seven years in Kittitas Valley and then I retrained in Gifted and Women’s Studies.

Lowther: Yes, you were head of the Women Studies Center for a time?

Sheldon: I went to the University of Michigan and was Director of Women’s Studies. We didn’t have - it wasn’t a center. It was for research.
Lowther: No when –

Sheldon: Oh yeah, 1982 through 87.

Lowther: Until you retired.

Sheldon: When I was the Director of the academic program, there was no such thing as a resource center. One badly needed and we - I actually got a letter. I sent for Ed Harrington authorizing me to have a room that we could call a resource center but separate from the academic center and the academic program because that’s what I was. I was Director of the academic program.

Lowther: Did you also teach courses in the Ed. department while you were in the Women’s Center?

Sheldon: Only in Gifted. I retrained at the University of Connecticut in - I got one year of retraining leave and this was something that I - I remember as a real positive feeling towards Central. It goes along with my general very positive feeling that Central allows the faculty to be themselves. I was very free to - to do what I enjoyed, what I wanted to do, and what I thought was needed. I thought we badly needed training in Gifted, teaching gifted children and got - and at that time I thought oh I’m so old, I’m 57 years old and I’m going to apply for this anyway. I was given a full year with full salary to retrain and - at the University of Connecticut. I did a sixth year program at the University of Connecticut in Gifted - teaching Gifted and Talented. Then I did all that was available at that time at the level that I was at the University of Michigan at the Second Institute for Integrating Women’s Studies into the curriculum. So it was really my training in Women’s Studies.

Lowther: Were you taking training in the Gifted and Women Studies at the same time?

Sheldon: No they were separate and I had a full summer schedule of teaching Gifted. Beginning of our minor in Gifted and when I was offered the position of Director of Women’s Studies and - but one requirement was that the person have training in Women’s Studies because that hadn’t been available when Madge Young, who preceded me, had become director. They felt that it was very important that the person have some training and know what Women’s Studies was all about. So I somehow got a - information on this institute and it was very expensive and the university said no problem we’ll pay for it. So I just had to figure out what to do with my summer school.

Lowther: Was that - that was in the 80’s?

Sheldon: That was ‘82.

Lowther: That’s interesting because that was a time of cut back in the university’s finances and you had no trouble getting this –

Sheldon: No, no I didn’t because it was - it all was very good. I also during my year of absence made full professor and went to - went to the Women’s Studies at the University of Michigan and taught my summer school classes, taught full time and got full salary for my summer school classes. The way I did it was put my creative teaching to work and I also got Charlie Vucek and I said now don’t we have the capability of my talking to my classes from the University of Michigan and I said if I would do video tapes so they could get the content of the course then could I hook up with them so that they could - we could talk back and forth? And he said, ‘yeah, we can do that.’ So he set up a conference call on Fridays for my three classes that I was teaching and during that - on the video tape, which was done in the studio, very professionally done I was proud pf it of teaching three courses, Creativity, Methods and Materials and Identifying Gifted. It was a horrendous job doing it because we had to write the script - I had to write the script and - but we did it. In the winter - I did it in late -early - winter and spring. So I had to wear summer clothes, sleeveless blouses (laughs) to teach in the summer. It was interesting. It was an interesting thing and then I had the
conference call on Friday with my students and they would ask me questions that had come up in their reading and so on. Then at the end of my - of the institute I returned and I was with them for one week. It was the full summer session because they were five and four and three credit classes. So I was with them for one week and we got to meet in person and that was very - that was memorable because those people all became teachers. Most of them finished their minor and then I began offering a minor through Normandy Park and through our center in Tri Cities. So I would - my schedule for those five years was to be in the Women’s Studies in the morning until about one o’clock and then at three o’clock on Mondays we were at Normandy Park and I would teach whatever class it was. Drive home that night, Women’s Studies in the morning and on Wednesday I had to drive to Tri-Cities to teach the classes and come back. In December I was snow on Snoqualmie and ice at Outlook. I could count on it. Either ice or fog at Outlook. So they’re good memories. Hard work. It was - those were days of a lot of stress and we lost one of our finest professors because of it and that was Shadle. Dr. Shadle fell asleep coming between here and Thorp coming from a night class. In fact, it wasn’t just a night class. I think he’d done a whole weekend over there. I think that was a very sad moment for the whole university because we were committed to our off campus programs and it was - I think it certainly made us aware that we had to use some good judgment. And the university did not necessarily encourage us but they would accept our staying over if it was necessary. I never did. I never - I couldn’t do it because I had to be here - I had to be here bright and early for Women’s Studies.

Lowther: Let me ask you, you know, a couple questions about your earlier assignment when you were stationed over in Clover Park. You were away from campus. Incidentally, did you - were you hired in as an assistant professor?

Sheldon: No, I was hired as an associate and I went back to the University of Utah and I said, ‘I think I have a job.’ I realize now that I was talking to an old time professor, you know, who had gone through this system, you know, probably started as an instructor. And I said, ‘They’ve offered ito me.’ I said, ‘They’ve offered me $10,000., and I said, ‘I was making more than that when I left the State Department of Education.’ I said, ‘I know with my doctorate I can go back to the State Department and earn $11,000.’ So I told them that, that I wouldn’t take it for $11,000 and so I said unless they will give me that salary I’m not going to take the job. Of course, the State Department was 8-5 twelve months of the year but I didn’t - I didn’t compare the two. Anyway, I got a call and sure enough they said they can’t offer me a higher salary but they can offer me associate professor at $11,000. And I said, ‘Alright, that’s okay. I don’t know what Associate Professor is,’ but they told me at the University of Utah, ‘That’s good.’ (laughs) Plus it took me thirteen years to get to full but –

Lowthr: When you were working in Clover Park away from campus, was there a problem there of, you know, feeling a lack of identification with Central? Did you miss being away from the campus? Did you feel any disadvantage?

Sheldon: Most of us didn’t because we were hired and went directly to our centers. We hated it when we had to come to cam pus. We liked it out there. We liked the school district. We identified with the school district very closely and –

Lowther: More than you identified with your department?

Sheldon: More than with the faculty. We didn’t know these strange people in Black Hall. And anyway we wondered it they were teaching students anything because they certainly when they came to us we had to do it all. (laughs) In later years, I realized that the one thing you can not teach on campus is how - is classroom management. You can teach about it, you can tell stories about how you did it but you can’t - the only way to teach it is to do it and that is such an important part of our Teacher Education program. Now, we on the west side, would get together once a month with all of the supervisors, Washington State University, Puget Sound - University of Puget Sound, not UW, but PLU and we would all get together and we would have a potluck and we would share - because we bumped into each other in the schools. Now at Clover Park
- the Clover Park district I don’t think ever had - it had UPS, the private schools were open to all of those districts but University of Washington and Central had very clearly defined limits on where we would have students. But we had a - we had a very close knit group on the coast and they frequently had faculty meetings so the Black Hall people came over so they could see where we were and then we also would go to Wentatchee. But the west side faculty was the large group.

Lowther: Did the faculty on the west side, regardless of the center they were in, did they frequently get together and do things together! Socialize?

Sheldon: We got to know each other much better than we did anywhere on campus. I didn’t get acquainted with campus faculty really until I became Director of Women’s Studies and with Gifted. That’s the first time I had an office in Black Hall. My offices were always in the school district.

Lowther: When you were supervising student teachers could you just sort of tell me - walk me through the typical work day. Who did you - where did you spend your time? What did you do?

Sheldon: Okay, yeah. Well, from the - in the beginning of the quarter we’d get a list of students and their applications so we had a little bit of information about them and with that information I went to the personnel director of the Clover Park district and we sat down and just matched from the paper information with teachers in the district who had indicated they wanted student teachers. So they were assigned and then the students arrived and I had a seminar with them and would tell them where they were assigned and then went through the rules of being a student teacher and being visitors in the school district. I also met with the teachers at one time. All of them together. So the teachers knew each other, you know, the elementary, secondary, and junior high. Then I began the first week, the first day they were assigned, going to all the schools. I was in the classroom with every student once a week. In the beginning it would just be a brief visit and then as the quarter progressed I remember they would give me then their schedules of what they would be doing during the day and then I would schedule my day according to when I could see them interacting with kids. I didn’t care what they were doing, if they were in the locker room teaching physical education or if they were in - out on the field, out at recess having - with first graders. It was my chance to see them with children and with students. So that’s the way I filled my day. My first students would be generally a high school student with an 8 o’clock class and then –

Lowther: Did you spend much time with the critic teachers, the Clover Park teachers who were you know directing over the student teachers?

Sheldon: I would see the teacher every time I visited the student teacher.

Lowther: Did you talk with them separately?

Sheldon: It was usually an informal thing. When I’d first go in I’d say, ‘How are things going?’ They’d say, ‘Oh they’re great,’ or, ‘I want to talk you about a couple of problems we’ve had.’ So we’d go to the faculty room and they’d mention the problem and sometimes I’d get calls at home from the classroom teacher with serious problems and then - I had one with Lakes High School. I got a call from the principal and he said, ‘Come in immediately.’ So the first thing in the morning I went to his office and he said, ‘We’re having trouble with your student teacher.’ He said, ‘His language is foul.’ I couldn’t believe it. I mean he was my model student teacher. I thought he was a no problem and he said, ‘Yeah, he lets out these words.’ So I talked with the student teacher and he said, ‘I just can’t believe it.’ He said, ‘It’s dorm talk. It’s the way we talk on campus,’ and he said, ‘When I got irritated,’ he said, ‘this word just came out.’ And so the - one of his students had gone home and said at the dinner table, ‘We’ve got the neatest student teacher. Today when so and so said something or other he said -.’ The parent called the principal. (laughs) Well, so I talked to him and he said - oh the student teacher - and he said, ‘It will never happen again.’ And I said, ‘Well, if it does you’re out.’ And the principal and I had talked and he said, ‘If it happens again, that’s it.’ It happened again and the student teacher the minute he said the word, or a word, he picked up his books and left, went to the principal and he said, ‘I can’t do it.’ He said, ‘It’s just too ingrained in me,’ he said, ‘these
words.’ So we withdrew him. A year later he did his student teaching in another district and I didn’t say anything. I didn’t ask the supervisor anything until the quarter was over and I then said, ‘How did he do?’ ‘Oh wonderful, great teacher.’ And then I told him this incident. He said, ‘I can’t believe it.’ He said, ‘I can’t imagine that happening.’ But this was not typical but there were many many cases, not of bad language but of other things where I got very well acquainted with the principals and the teachers.

Lowther: Tell us a little bit about –

Putnam: We’re not ready.

Lowther: You’re not ready yet? Okay.

Putnam: Okay.

Lowther: Dorothy, could you tell us a little bit about your recollections of the department chairs and your relationship with them. I know that you knew Con Potter and he was probably the first chair that you experienced when you came to Central. So tell me about Con and your relationship with him.

Sheldon: Okay, I had a good relationship with Con and he - we just - we could disagree. I - one great disappointment came to me because of Con’s philosophical opposition to the policy regarding sabbaticals on campus and that they didn’t hire somebody to replace the person on sabbatical. Well the Ed. department always had full classes. We didn’t have to worry about giving somebody a class in order for them to have a full load. So I wanted to apply for a sabbatical during the Centennial. So I had contacted and made enough contacts so that I could apply for a sabbatical to do a hundred year recollection somehow of the country schools. Mark Hatfield in Oregon, Terrell Bell, he was the first secretary of the Department of Education. Ted and I were debate partners in college at Albion. So I knew Ted very well and knew his school and I knew it would be easy to get information from him. So I sent him my proposal and Con was out of town and he was gone a lot he had cooperative education or - cooperative between all of the universities - no the universities and the school districts. A very big program that he started. So I went to the dean and the dean said, well he’d just sign it because I came to him second anyway and he was sure there was no problem with my proposal. So when the list came out in the Daily Record, that’s where most of us got our information about what was going on at Central anyway, (laughs) I saw that my name wasn’t on the list. So I questioned Con and he said - well he said, ‘I wouldn’t have approved that.’ He said, ‘I don’t approve of sabbaticals.’ I thought it was just a proposal that anyone would disapprove of, not the idea of sabbatical. Well, the way I handled it was there was no need to argue with Con. I knew that from day one but in a faculty meeting I said I asked a question about a sabbatical but before I did that I went to whoever was at that time the head of the - of our sabbatical leave committee and said, ‘I want all of the information that is public information on sabbatical leaves. I want to see how many people from the Department of Education routinely get sabbatical leaves.’ There was a fair proportion getting them right up to 1967. After 1967 and well into the 70’s it was rare. Maybe one or two. I think maybe three people in all of the time that Con was department chair got sabbaticals. So I brought this up in a faculty meeting and I said I was very disappointed that my sabbatical was not approved and that I didn’t get my sabbatical and he said - and so then he had to say in front of the the whole faculty that he didn’t believe in them. The faculty, mainly the field supervisors who weren’t close to him - you know we were in out out of his office every day and kind of getting to be a buddy with Con the way some of them were and they said, ‘Well why?’ you know, ‘Why don’t you?’ And he said because I don’t. I remember Mel Norris, he raised his hand and he said, ‘I’ll take Dorothy’s load.’ He said, ‘No problem.’ He said, ‘I’ll take part of her student teaching load,’ and somebody else said, ‘I’ll take part of her load.’ And he said, ‘That’s the way we operate Con. We help each other. We’re a team out there,’ and all this stuff. Well I had the statistics and Dan Unruh had gotten a sabbatical and I questioned it. I said, Why did you approve Dan?’ because it was then through the department because he did a - something with law and he was going to offer a course in law and that would be such a benefit for the department and so some things like that and that caused a big mess. I went back to my student teaching center. No - yeah. By that time I had bought Woldale so I no longer had an identity with the university. From then on wherever I went I would see somebody who would say, ‘I think I know you.’ And
I’d say, ‘I’m a professor at the University. And I bought the Woldale School.’ ‘Oh yes you’re the lady who bought the Woldale School.’ I thought all of my dreams of being known forever as a professor in the University went right down the tubes when I bought the Woldale School where I still live in Yakima now for over 20 years.

Lowther: What was the outcome of that - the dispute over sabbaticals.

Sheldon: I think that there was a change because they said that absolutely they didn’t have the money to hire somebody to pay somebody to come in. I had another thing that happened to me. I had to have surgery in 1973 and it was to remove my stomach. So it was involved but I arranged my classes so I wouldn’t miss much time and I thought I can take my night class and double up and then I’ll have my stomach out and I’ll be back by winter quarter and - because it was Thanksgiving and Christmas and Azella took my students for the last spring. So by January, when winter quarter started, I was able to take my load. She and I switched. She took all the elementary and I took all the secondary. I only had about nine students and it was close and I was driving so no problem and every month I’d turn in my travel voucher. Then it came time at the end of the quarter for faculty analysis sheet and stamped across mine was on sick leave, did not work and I was irate. I said, ‘I have worked every day of winter quarter.’ Well Dean Poffenroth was the Acting President. Do you remember that? For one quarter?

Putnam: Or was he dean?

Sheldon: He wasn’t a dean at that time. Yes he was. Was he a dean? Anyway, he was the one so - I didn’t know what to do. Now that was the disadvantage of being stationed off campus because we had no idea the chain of command. So I didn’t - didn’t know what to do and so I was told to go talk to Poffenroth. That’s right. I think he was Acting Vice-President for a while maybe but he was also Dean. Yeah. So it was - he was embarrassed. He didn’t know what to say because I had this thing in front of me and I said I’ve worked every day and I got paid. Well, but you were eligible so we put you on sick leave for money so we could use your salary to hire somebody in another department and I said, ‘What if I have to take a quarter of sick leave?’ ‘Well you can have as much sick leave as you want absolutely forever and ever.’ And I never got sick again. But that was very interesting and that was even that story and a lot similar to it were told when who was the woman the trustee from Moses Lake? I can’t think her name.

Putnam: Linda –

Sheldon: Yes, Linda –

Lowther: She was from Ephrata, yeah.

Sheldon: From Ephrata, she was our trustee. She asked all of the faculty women to meet with her and she said, This was the beginning of a thing called Affirmative Action,’ which we didn’t know, you know. A lot of new things happened during our tenure but I told that story and that was unbelievable that they would transfer funds like that and put a person on a sick leave. Lowther: Do you think there was an element of sex discrimination involved here?

Sheldon: I don’t know. I think that if it wasn’t sex discrimination it was a power thing because they knew women wouldn’t speak up. Women wouldn’t say anything. And there were so few of us anyway. I had been retired five years and was still the only full professor, woman full professor, in the Department of Education and I was on phased retirement and I think that Minerva Caples made full professor at the end of my phased retirement. That’s how few women there were and women - and women -what do I think to say - I want to say in line. We never have understood what the criteria are for promotion.

Lowther: Did you have any other incidents worth relating concerning Con Potter?
Sheldon: Alright, not really Con Potter but I wrote the NCATE report absolutely from the first word to the last word in 1978 against whatever - anyway - the one prior to this last one and did the whole thing. I went to the training to do it. I was in Dean Applegate’s office writing it with Dodie Haight. Typing it with carbon paper. But I wrote the whole thing and it was submitted and there were three NCATE reports that year that were recognized as the best reports. Done properly, having met the new - what do you call them?

Lowther: Standards.

Sheldon: The new standards. Reported the new standards. We hadn’t met everything but we had reported them accurately and so Central was invited to go to Dallas to receive this award, this recognition. I, by accident, I got a letter from the trustee, Linda, congratulating Ron Frye on having received this award and I said to, I guess it was Bob Canton’s secretary, ‘Where are Bob and Ron and Jimmy Applegate going?’ She said, ‘They’re going to Dallas.’ I was irate. They didn’t even tell me. I had to find it out in this letter that just happened- I just happened to see and that was - I took it straight to Vice President Harrington. I said, ‘I wrote that report every bit of it, and I said, ‘I not only was not acknowledged as the writer and given an opportunity to go to Dallas, but they didn’t even tell me.’ So that’s when Dean Applegate was called to Harrington’s office and it’s also the year that I was not on the list for promotion for full professor. It’s the year I got it.

Lowther: Well thank you very much for this interview.

Sheldon: Yeah, nobody’s going to look at that for another 30 years anyway, so.

Lowther: Oh, you never can tell.

Putnam: Oh I guess I still have a little bit extra there.

Lowther: Oh I thought I saw the - Since we have a few minutes left on the tape go ahead and tell us your more - additional stories.

Sheldon: Well there was Bob Carlton - was the one who came after Con. And Bob allowed a great deal of freedom. I have a funny story about teaching creative teaching in the summer and we had an assignment. The students and I were going to wear hats on a very windy day and we would not take the hat off because of the wind. So we had to think of a creative way to keep it the things to our head and I had an apron that by snapping it in a certain way it would become a bonnet. So I wore the bonnet. It had a big bow under the neck. So I went about my teaching business that day wearing this bonnet and during the day I was called in by the secretary that Dr. Carlton wanted to talk to me and it was serious. It was about a student teacher. So I walked into his office and we sat there face to face conducting this very sensitive talk about this student teacher and he never made a snide remark and I didn’t say anything about it. So it was just a part of my persona to do things that were a little bit - not main stream but it was an example of how I didn’t have to worry about all of these - being in a particular role and that was very good. Then again in 1981 I read in the paper that Terrell Bell had been appointed by President Reagan to be the first Head of the Department of Education. And Ted and I had been debate partners at Albion in 1940 and ‘42. I woke up in the middle of the night and thought what are the chances of in 1941 that Ted would be the head of the largest educational system in the world I imagine, that formal position and I would be Full Professor of Education at a university when we had gone to school just to be school teachers at maybe a country school some place. So I got to thinking about how many kids are there out there in those little country schools and Damman and Thorp and Kittitas and they were smaller then than they are now and Easton and Cle Elum because those were all the districts that had fewer than 800 students in each district. I thought if we could get them right now and bring them to the university and introduce them to the university, get mentors for them that they wouldn’t have to wait until they got to college where Ted and I did. We were recognized the first time we had ever been recognized as being gifted and having talent. We were both talkers and we neither of us had taken debate in high school but the debate coach tagged us and
said that we should take debate. So we did and we won second place in the Tri-State - in the Tri-State Debate Competition and I thought we could have done that in high school if we had known and we could have done it in elementary school, anyway if the talents are recognized early. So I went into Bob and said I have an idea, I would like to identify the children in the districts who are gifted. I would do it by my criteria which I have learned at the University of Connecticut and would combine what I had learned there with what I already believed and knew. I identified the students and would bring them to campus. We’d provide them mentors from among our faculty and they would spend time on campus and get to know it. And he thought it was a wonderful idea, especially because it wouldn’t cost any money. It was all going to be volunteer and so I actually did it. I got started and then I realized that I had the tiger by the tail. I had five districts that said, ‘Oh yes come in let’s do it,’ and I didn’t know where to start and didn’t have any money. So I went to Darwin Goodey in Psychology and he said, ‘Well that comes into my category.’ He said, ‘Yeah I have some money. We can do that.’ So he and I - I wrote all of the questions for identification for parents and teachers and peers and he was able to get them all duplicated with his funds and he and I then did workshops on how to use the forms to do the identifying and we - lets see. Then I went to the University of Michigan. This was in between Connecticut and the University of Michigan. So we got the kids identified and that fall started the Mentor Program and the Mentor Program was still going strong last fall, 1994 and I said there’s a time to quit. The kids who had started out in Kindergarten were now graduating from high school and we had hundreds of children who came to campus every month for activities and they were in every department and program on campus and we had oh I don’t know how many that graduated from Central. I believe part of it was because of this early introduction. But the Mentor Program is still going. The leadership was turned over last fall to - I can’t, now I’ve gone blank. But I don’t know the people in Black Hall anymore. I know Bob Weiking is one who will be working with them and Minerva Caples and the other is Jenny Durgen. That’s not her name though. Goin? I think its Jenny, no Ginny. She just finished her doctorate but she actually has the leadership of it and it’s still going and that was a program that took about half my time.

Lowther: Did the program consist of bringing the students to campus and acquainting them with –

Sheldon: No they would go to the departments and we’d provide the activities.

Lowther: Okay.

Putnam: Let’s just stop.

Sheldon: There will be an - if there’s anybody who then wants to follow up on ? I expect that they’re going to be things housed in the University. They should be in the library. We don’t have a curriculum library anymore do we?

Putnam: I don’t think so because I don’t think there’s anyone who has followed up on that.

Sheldon: I think it’s in Black Hall isn’t it. And they moved the Curriculum Library into the pre-service?

Lowther: Well, it’s moved out of the library so –

Sheldon: Yeah, I think it’s in Black Hall now but now being moved someplace else while they remodel.

Lowther: Well I hope you do write extensively about your experience here.

Sheldon: Well, I’m going to do one of two things or maybe both but I’m thinking about seminary.

Putnam: Are you?

Sheldon: Uh huh. I’m going to see the possibilities. Be a Unitarian Universalist.
Putnam: Oh my goodness gracious.

Sheldon: Yeah, I think I really found - I found a place that my soul believes and you use good people. Good good group. I went to general assembly for just one day and was - I came home

Lowther: Is there a group here in Ellensburg?

Sheldon: Well I’m the Lay leader.

Lowther: Is there a minister?

Sheldon: No, many of the UU groups are laymen. I started it in 1991 and then a year ago became the Lay leader. The membership –

Lowther; You used to be a Methodist.

Sheldon: Oh I’ve been a Baptist, Presbyterian. I was in Protestant Women of the Chapel. I’ve been everything. You know I’ve followed good people. I was a Congregationalist too.