

This is the transcription of an interview with Ramona Holsinger conducted on May 18, 2017 by Barbara Truesdell as part of Indiana University's Bicentennial Oral History Project.

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Barbara Truesdell: I am Barbara Truesdell, and today's date is May 18, 2017, and I am here with Ramona Holsinger in Angola, Indiana to talk about IU and her life. And can we start by you telling me your full name, and the year you graduated from IU, and your major?

Ramona Holsinger: Are you ready?

BT: I am ready.

RH: All right. I went to IU on campus 10 years after I graduated from Ball State at Muncie, Indiana. Ball State Teacher's College.

Third Person: What year did you graduate, Ramona?

RH: In 1937. I graduated from high school in 1933. From Ball State, in 1937.

BT: Okay, and then 10 years later, you went to IU.

RH: Ten years later, I started on the course where the professor came up to South Bend and taught a class up there, and I joined that class.

BT: Oh, okay. And so, let's back up a little and start with where were you born and what year you were born?

RH: I was born in Muncie, Indiana on June 1, 1915.

BT: 1915. Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your family, Ramona?

RH: Yes, I had a brother, Lynn, who is about two and a half years older than I am. I had a wonderful mother. My father was a factory worker all his life. He worked at Warner Gear factory in Muncie.

My father, if this is of any interest to you, was taken out of school at the age of 14 by a German family, the father who came from a family where the oldest boy always quit school to help support the rest of the family, and that was my father's . . . that's what they did to my father.

He came out of school at age 14 and went to work at the Dunkirk Glass factory with his German father . . . and he knew nothing but factory work from then on. But a hard, hard worker, and a very good father and a loving father.

BT: And what was his name, Ramona?

RH: His name was Lawrence Ambos Holsinger.

BT: Okay, and what was your mother's name?

RH: Marie Leone Fields. And she hated the name Leone.

BT: And how was Leone spelled? Is that L-E-O-N-N-E?

RH: No, it was L-E-O-N-E.

BT: Okay, okay. And you mentioned you had a brother. Did you have other brothers and sisters?

RH: No, that was my only brother. A wonderful brother.

BT: And he was older or younger?

RH: He was two and a half years older than I am. He graduated from Ball State the same year I did. My brother had been an asthmatic all his life, and he laid out of high school for the number of years it took to—so that we could go to Ball State together. We went through four years of Ball State together. We graduated together.

BT: Wonderful. Did your family encourage you to go to college and encourage him to go to college?

RH: I don't know that they did. I just remember that I always wanted to be a schoolteacher. I taught my dolls. I think they were the smartest ones in the neighborhood [laughs].

BT: Well, tell me a little bit about your time at Ball State. Did you enjoy your classes?

RH: Yes, I did. I enjoyed my classes, and while I was there, I got to join a sorority. I joined the Kappa Kappa sorority. Beta chapter of the Kappa Kappa sorority. It is now known as AOPi, I believe.

BT: Okay. I've heard of them.

RH: Yes, because we were not a national sorority at that time. I believe AOPi is a national sorority now.

BT: I think that's so. And did you enjoy being a sorority sister?

RH: I loved it.

BT: What did you like about it?

RH: Oh, I just loved all the girls. They were all lots of fun. And when we would have our yearly dance, I always looked forward to that because we always tried to have a big time orchestra come in. And the thing is I love to dance. I've loved to dance all my life.

BT: I love to dance, too.

RH: Oh, good. That will keep you young.

BT: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed. So, did you do student teaching as part of your undergraduate?

RH: Student teaching. Yes, I did.

BT: Where did you teach?

RH: Oh gosh, that school there in Muncie. It was a junior high school. I can't quite remember the name of it, honey.

BT: That's all right.

RH: I'm sorry.

BT: No, that's all right. So, you planned to teach junior high. Is that what you did when you graduated?

RH: No, when I went in, I just went in as a major in physical education and social studies.

BT: Oh, wonderful. I always liked social studies.

RH: I did too.

BT: So, once you graduated, what happened next?

RH: I joined a teacher's—I joined an association which tried to get jobs for teachers. And I went several different places, and I had some interesting experiences because when I would go to apply, they would say, "Do you smoke? Do you drink?" "No." "Do you dance?" "Yes."

And then, I could see right away a black mark went down with me because I was applying at Goshen, Indiana, and that was the wrong place to say you danced [laughs]. So, I couldn't lie. I love to dance. And what were my politics? Was I republican or democrat?

BT: Good grief.

RH: And many times, the minute I would say I was a republican, right went the book. I knew right then that I was done for. And so, I never knew whether to say I was a democrat or a republican.

BT: They didn't give you a third option? You couldn't say, "I vary, I'm independent, I . . ."

RH: You know, I was inexperienced. I didn't know what to say. In fact, I was scared to death. Oh my. But when I got over in the Goshen area, over in that part of the state, I knew I would be smart not to say I danced, or to say I smoked, or to say I drank. It was all right. I didn't have much trouble saying whether I was a democrat or a republican, but sometimes I said, "Well, I hadn't made up my mind yet."

BT: That's a good answer actually. So, where did you end up teaching?

RH: My very first job was at a little country school called Rolling Prairie. And the little town was called Rolling Prairie, Indiana. It's a few miles out of La Porte. And that was the farthest away I'd ever been from my home, but I liked it up there. It was a nice little town. Much, much smaller than Angola.

And I had a bicycle, so I took my bicycle up there with me. And fortunately, I talked a couple other teachers up there to buying bicycles, and because there wasn't much to do in a little town, a few hundred, we would go bicycle riding at night.

And, well, let me see . . . bicycle riding, and then you might sit at home in the room you had, and you would crochet, or else you would do other kinds of handiwork. And I lived with an old widow lady. An elderly widow lady, I should say. And she was very kind to me and, let me see, I'm trying to think what else we did for excitement.

BT: Did they have dances? Did they have . . .

RH: No, we didn't have dances or anything like that. They weren't that . . .

BT: Church social, maybe—

RH: —Progressive, you see. Oh, maybe a church social once in a while.

BT: Okay. What grade were you teaching in Rolling Prairie?

RH: I was teaching in . . . Rolling Prairie. I taught high school. When I taught, that was high school. I taught health and history, and I guess that was it.

BT: No phys ed there?

RH: Oh, yes, yes, physical education. Of course, that. I'm sorry, I forgot that.

BT: No, that's fine.

RH: Yes, girls physical education.

BT: Girls phys ed. What kinds of things would they do in a girls phys ed class?

RH: Oh, we learned how to do a forward roll first. Then we did—well, what, forward rolls, headstands.

BT: I never could do that.

RH: You never could do that. Didn't you ever learn to do a frog headstand first?

BT: I was able to do that, but could never get my feet over my head [laughs].

RH: Well, there should have been somebody to help you just gently lift them up in the air until you got your balance. Oh, let me see. Well, most of the things I had in college. A balance beam. I think we had a balance beam we walked. But forward rolls, backward rolls, and . . .

BT: Trampoline?

RH: Stand on your head. No, we did not have a trampoline until I went to South Bend, and that is an interesting story. What do you want to know next?

BT: Tell me about the trampoline in South Bend since it's an interesting story, and we're thinking about it right now.

RH: All right. You know, there used to come around—these magazine companies would come around, and if you sell so many . . . oh, what do I want to say?

BT: Subscriptions?

RH: So many subscriptions, yes. Thank you. So many subscriptions, you would get prizes, and they would come around and show you little bears and little animals and things like that.

If you got so many subscriptions, you would get this particular little bear or this little animal of some kind, and usually they were nice big animals and you would think, "Oh boy, that's a pretty looking bear. I'm going to be tickled to death to get that." And when the ending up of the program came, your little bear that you thought was going to be a nice big bear, it was a nice little tiny bear that you got.

BT: [Laughs] Oh, no.

RH: That was—dare I say it? That was misleading the students. They thought they were going to get a nice big animal and here it came to be along a little tiny thing. And what hurt me was to see the look of disappointment on the kids' faces when they handed them their prize.

"I thought I was going to get a nice big white bear or something, and here it is this little tiny thing." And the look of disappointment always hurt me because it was a little bit of—just a little bit of misleading.

And when you build a kid's – what do I want to say – his expectations up, say, "I'm going to get something really nice," and they come and hand you something that is a disappointment. That let down. If you're a conscientious teacher, and I think I was, that hurt me because I hated to see the look of disappointment on the kids' faces. But anyway, can I go back to the trampoline?

BT: Of course.

RH: The coach and I decided this time, "Let's try for a big prize." So, we looked through the book, and finally we saw a trampoline and we asked if we could work for that trampoline. Well, by that time, I'm in my late twenties and I'm still agile. I could still stand on my head and jump over the horse and the buck.

So, we set our goal for that trampoline, and the kids were so excited about it. And I must tell you, they worked their heads off. They worked, worked, worked. And what hurt me was that they would go out at night, and I didn't want to see little kids have to go out at night, but they went out at night.

Long story short, we made the goal for the trampoline, and when it came, it was a beautiful, beautiful, big trampoline, and the kids loved it. Now, the teacher didn't know a darn thing about trampolines, but she got up there and after she fell down and knocked her head a few times, she learned where to keep her head and her feet.

And the teacher and the coach, they enjoyed the trampoline just as much as the kids did because neither one of us knew beans about it. But boy, it didn't take us long to learn which to keep each end up, you know [laughs].

BT: [Laughs] It's a learn as you go experience.

RH: Oh, you learned as you went. That's right. And I think the coach and I enjoyed it probably as much or more than the kids. I don't know, we had a great time with it. The other schools were jealous because we had a trampoline, and we were the only grade school in town to have a trampoline.

BT: Okay, so you were teaching grade school in South Bend?

RH: When I went to South Bend, I was from first grade up through eighth grade.

BT: Okay. Oh, that's a big range.

RH: That was a big range. Finally, they took the eighth grade over to Riley and put them in a junior high then. So that eventually, James Monroe was mostly just from kindergarten up through sixth grade. That's what we ended up being.

BT: So, what prompted you, after 10 years, to go after your master's?

RH: Oh, that was the thing to do, honey. You just—when you were in South Bend, you wanted to get your master's degree. And I had known several other people who had gone to IU for their master's and always had a good reputation. So, gosh, if I could go to IU and get my master's degree, I was floating high, honey. That was great. So, it took me 10 years after I started teaching to get my master's degree.

BT: Oh, so you were working on it . . .

RH: During school.

BT: During school.

RH: During teaching, uh-huh. They would have a teacher come up from IU. I don't know whether they were actually teaching at IU or not, but at least they were sent up by IU. And I just went to school after my school.

I would go downtown, I think it was to the school city office building. And we would have a teacher come in from IU or else one certified by IU. And there would be quite a big class of us, of teachers from South Bend there, that would go down and take these after school courses from IU.

BT: Well, I imagine, yes.

RH: Uh-huh, we did.

BT: And was this in social studies and phys ed?

RH: What?

BT: These classes, were they for social studies and physical education?

RH: No, they were mostly about physical education. Well, up from IU or certified by IU, no, they were all about physical education. The history and a lot of things like that.

BT: Okay. So, did you ever go down to the campus and take classes there?

RH: Yes, I did. Two summers.

BT: So, tell me a little bit about that. Where did you live when you went down?

RH: I lived in a private home. I couldn't tell you where now. It was a little distance from the campus, but one that I was able to walk to.

BT: Okay. Did you have any of your friends or your colleagues who went with you, so that you could kind of be together?

RH: Yes, one of my schoolteachers there at Monroe in South Bend went down with me, and we were down there . . . she was there one summer with me. I can't quite recall who. Maybe she was there both summers, but we lived in a private home. I can't tell you just where. Within walking distance of the campus, but I would say it was a good walk.

I would have an interesting walk because there was a square where we walked, where there were two dogs in that square that lived in that square, and they would meet us every morning down at the end of the square where they lived, and they would walk us this one square up to the end of the other square.

And it was a big dog and a little dog, and they would walk from this end of the square to the other end of the square, and then they would stop. And that was the end of the walk, but we got it every blessed day. They would meet us, they would walk us to the end of the square, and then they would stop and like, “Goodbye, girls. Get on your way” [laughs].

BT: I’m sure the dogs looked forward to that. They were like, “Here they come.”

RH: I think they must have, but believe me, we looked forward to it. That was so funny. Let me see . . . one terrible thing happened to me on one of these walks. I don’t know if you want this even in your story.

BT: It’s up to you. If you would like to share it, I’d certainly be happy to hear it.

RH: Well, I started down this walk this one morning. The dogs had met us, and we were walking along, and all of a sudden, I don’t . . . you’re too young for this, of course, but back in those days, your panties didn’t have the right kind of elastic in them.

And I am walking along the square with my little dogs, and all of a sudden, the elastic gave away and my pretty pink underwear . . . all of a sudden, I am realizing that I no longer have my pink panties up around my waist. They are down around my feet.

And my little dog stopped while I went to take care of my pink panties, to pull them up, you know. And I happened to look up and there’s this house there sitting there, and this man is sitting up there on the porch and he’s laughing. And I felt so embarrassed. I said, “Oh my Lord, what am I going to do? What can I do?”

Well, you can’t do anything but reach down and pull them up. So, I reached down and pulled them up, and I saw him up there sitting laughing. And so, what do you do? I looked at him, and I didn’t know what to do, so I waved at him.

Third Person: [Laughs] Show's over!

RH: And bless his heart, he waved back.

BT: [Laughs] You made his day.

RH: So, I finally got myself collected and I got ready, and I got my books picked up and headed on for the IU school. Completely humiliated, but I didn't know what to do, but just try to gather my dignity up along with my books.

Third Person: And your panties.

RH: And my panties, yes [laughs]. And my panties. And make it on my way to class.

BT: That's wonderful. Did you have favorite classes or favorite professors?

RH: Yes, I did. I won't say that—none of them were bad, really and truly. I learned a lot of things in my class where I learned a bit about driving. I was taking a class in that, trying to be able to teach driving at the summer schools back in South Bend. So, I learned that women back up much, much better than men do.

"Men can't back a car up worth anything," the professor said. So, women back up cars better than men do, so I learned that much. Let me see . . . oh, I made a lot of friends with some of the male students, and they would admit that women probably were pretty good drivers after all.

BT: Good for them.

RH: Yeah. Let's see . . . oh, when I first went, the first night I got in town after I got settled in my room, we drove across town because my cousin had moved down there. Her husband was taking a course, and so they and their baby moved down there. So, I went over to see her.

And oh golly neds, we had such a good time with her, but there were a few new shows had come to town and one was this thing . . . Woody Woodpecker was becoming famous at that time.

So, we sat down there at her house like stupid students and tried to mimic Woody Woodpecker, and we thought we did pretty good, but then we would get in hysterics, laughing over that. Well, let's see, what else? We just had a lot of silly times because we were in our early twenties.

BT: Sure. So, did you have an advisor who was helping you sort of structure your master's program?

RH: Not really. Not really. I just knew that I wanted my master's degree in physical education and that's what I went for.

BT: Okay, did you have—oh, go ahead.

RH: I was going to say, there was . . . when we would be walking around the campus, maybe sometimes at noon, we would pass a table of professors and they would . . . we became very friendly with them in a nice sort of way, student-like, and they would tell us of all the things that they had to go through.

Sometimes they'd say, "You think you've got it bad. Well, what do you think about being a coach at Ball State?" Or someplace other than IU. There was a young man there by the name of Donnie and he was a professor. He was so funny over—he was over in Ohio someplace. No, no, Illinois, Illinois. And they would tell us of all the grief.

They'd say, "You play the boys, you live in the country, you get heck from the people who live in town. You play people who live in town, you get heck from the people who live in the country. You can't win." And they would just keep us in hysterics about all the troubles that college professors had.

They'd say sometimes, "You think you've got it hard. What if you taught here at this college and you'd be required to do this?" Well, we would laugh and joke and say well, we were glad . . . where we were. And they would keep us in stitches and good and ready laughs every day when we would go by their table.

Let me see. As I said, there was a professor by the name of Donnie, and he was just that, but he was funnier than all get out and he was the one that taught over in Illinois. So,

Professor Donnie always had good stories to tell us each day. And I can't remember who the professor was from Ball State. I didn't know him at the time. Sorry, I can't remember his name. But he became a nice acquaintance later on.

BT: Were they down visiting or were they there for classes?

RH: They were there for classes, honey. They were there for classes. And they didn't—our lunch table where we ate our lunch was not too far from their table where they ate lunch.

And so, we could hear them talking about things, and sometimes we might add in and say, "You professors think you've got it hard. Listen to this," and then we would tell them a funny story that maybe we had to go through.

So, we became, I won't say well-acquainted, but we became comfortably acquainted with these . . . we called them our table of professors. And sometimes, we would be real nasty and we would say, "There's a table of know-it-alls." Well, we liked to tease them.

BT: And was this in the union?

RH: Probably some of this was in the union hall where we ate. Where we ate probably was in the union hall. Honey, that seems so long ago.

BT: I'm sure.

RH: Lots of funny things happened I'm sure I'll never remember to tell you because there were a lot of funny things happened. And I will say, many friends made. Just many friends made. And many of the professors we had, and I will have to say many of the professors I had, have become friends of mine. A lot of them are gone now.

And I know there was—I wish I could think of their names. There was a man and woman professor. He was always thought of as such a meanie, a hard-looking professor, but her name was Carolyn . . . Caroline, but he was—she was always the professor to get. Stay away from him because he would work the socks off of you, but she was much nicer.

BT: And this was in the School of Education?

RH: This was in the School of Physical Education.

BT: Okay, we'll be able to look that up then and find those names.

RH: Her name, Carolyn or Caroline or something, and it seemed to me like his name was Karl, but I'm not sure of that. But he was a strict one. She was a nice one. Get ahold of her.

BT: Did you have—oh, go ahead.

RH: And we did love it. We did love it. Now, we respected him, but we were scared of him. And now, let me see.

BT: Did you have a favorite student hangout with your friends?

RH: I don't know. There was someplace where we used to go and get—and the boys and girls would hang out there, and there they would pick up dates, and somebody came over and saw you sitting there at the counter drinking a Coke, and I don't know where that was for heaven's sakes.

But if they liked your looks, they might say, "Would you like to take a walk around the campus or go someplace?" They might have a car available and you could go such and such a place. Oh, I know one of the highlights was when we got to go to Mexico. We went on that three-weeks tour to Mexico. And that was—oh, that was wonderful. That was a highlight.

BT: Whereabouts did you go?

RH: In Mexico? Oh gosh, Taxco. We went to someplace where they were famous for silver, and we did have a nice hotel. I guess it was the nicest hotel in Mexico City and we liked it there. It was very nice, but we also learned when you go to the markets and things, you dare not set your pocketbook down or it wouldn't be there very long.

And yet, there were—oh, we had a driver that took us around, and his name was Jesus and we asked him how you spelled it, and he said, "J-E-S-U-S." It was Jesus. And we

said what did you want us to call him and he said, well, we could call him whatever we wanted to. We could call him Jesus if we wanted to.

And to this day, I can't remember what we called him. I just remember that he was a very lovely driver. And we went down one time to the place where they made all the silver, and that was quite a thrilling thing.

And another thing that I was thrilled with: the cathedrals had such beautiful doors and such beautiful windows. Oh, and that just thrilled me to death to get to see those because I liked art and I used to like to oil—not oil paint. Water paint, I liked to do.

That was one of my pet things. I painted – I don't know if I still have it or not – I painted a picture of our courthouse down here in watercolors. I hope I still have it. But I like doing watercolors mostly. A few oils, but I like the watercolors better.

BT: Watercolors are challenging. Yeah. Hard to control.

RH: Yeah, they are. They are.

BT: Did you belong to any clubs or organizations? Were you still part of sorority life down . . .

RH: No, I did not. That was the only one. They used to have a geography club and an art club, but I did not belong to any of those. And because part of my school life, we moved to town. I had lived in the country, and we moved to town, and so I was close to the tennis courts because we lived fairly close to the college. And . . .

Third Person: Well, Ramona, weren't you part of the state organization for physical education teachers?

RH: The Indiana Association of Health and Physical Education and Recreation. Yeah, well, the latter part of my life, I – and you will understand why – I was named a historian [laughs].

BT: Oh, wonderful. That's great.

RH: And I had been there—yes, I had been the secretary of the state organization there for a while.

BT: What was the organization's goals? What did it do?

RH: You mean like the Organization of Health, Physical Education and Recreation?

BT: Right. Right.

RH: Well, we had meetings. We had yearly meetings, and at the convention time, like when it was a teachers' convention. And children got out of school in the fall when the teachers had their teachers' convention. The children would get out of school.

And we had a teacher who would leave the meetings early. This goes way back to my childhood. And she would take us to the park, which was a nice walk away, but we would walk it and she would take us over to Muncie city parks, and we would get to play on the playground.

And by the way, the school I went to in Muncie, the grade school, was Garfield School. And we happened to be located in the edge of the park, and at recess time, we got to sneak over to the park and play on the park playgrounds.

And that was great because the school didn't have to buy all that equipment, and we could swing our hearts away on the things until recess was over, and then we'd go back to our classroom.

BT: Yep, sounds good. Were you involved in any kind of student government while you were at IU?

RH: No, I was not. No, I was not.

BT: Was part of your classes—were they all coursework, or did you actually have to go to the physical education building and do physical education things?

RH: We did not. We did not.

BT: Okay, I just wondered.

RH: Much of it was philosophy and history of our field.

BT: Okay, did you have to write a master's thesis?

RH: I don't think—I did not, no. I did not. I took extra courses. For some reason, it took the place of writing a thesis.

BT: Well, it makes sense that it should. You were also trying to live your life and earn a living. What are your memories of the campus? How it looked, what parts of it you enjoyed, where you often were, where was the school of education, and . . .

RH: Oh, gosh. I don't know. I just enjoyed being on the campus. A lot of students, at night, you'd just take walks on the campus and enjoy the beauty of it. Now, one thing I never got to do which I wanted to be able to do is to see some games, but I did have the privilege of, at one of our . . . what do I want to say?

One of our meetings, I did get the privilege of sitting right across from Bobby Knight, and oh, impressed with him. I just thought he was a top-notch guy. I thought Bobby Knight was super in my book, and when he threw the chair across the hall, I didn't blame him. Well, because that man had to go through so much criticism and he was doing a good, good job. If you ask me, am I a Knight fan? Yes, I am.

BT: Okay, does that mean you're a basketball fan as well?

RH: Yes, ma'am.

BT: Is that a lifetime passion?

RH: Well, I tell you, my brother taught down here at Auburn. He was a math teacher most of his life, but he was also a coach. And I knew what coaches had to go through with, and so I'm losing track here.

BT: No, that's okay. We were talking about Bobby Knight.

RH: Yeah. Well, I was the only one in my family got to meet Bobby Knight, but I will have to tell you this, slip this in – it's not worth two cents, honey – but my dad was a

Purdue fan. And I said, “Dad, how’s come—your son got his master’s degree from IU, your daughter got her master’s degree from IU. Can’t you be an IU fan?”

“Well, it’s not that. It’s that when I was a boy, a young boy, there used to be a boy from Dunkirk that went to Purdue, and on weekends or days vacations, he would come back and he would teach us little boys how to play football. I’ve never forgotten it, and I guess I’ll always be a Purdue fan.” And it wasn’t that he had anything against IU. It was just this nice boy that taught them how to play football.

BT: Oh, isn’t that nice?

RH: Yeah.

BT: Did you receive any awards or scholarships? Internships, anything like that?

RH: No. I was not a scholar, honey. I was an average student. Tickled to death if I ever got an A. Was very pleased with the Bs I got. I can’t remember getting any Cs ever in college.

BT: And since you were already working, I assume that’s how you paid for your master’s degree.

RH: I was teaching, yes. I know we had one man who came up with such a bad reputation. Was his name Hamilton? No, I can’t remember. But he came up and everybody says, “Be careful of him because he really is tough.” But several of us women teachers up there and we got along just fine with him.

It was the men who told us all that he was a mean teacher and a hard teacher, and we just got along just fine with him. And I mean, he wasn’t paying us any special privileges at all. We just happened—but you know, there are people you happen to click with, like I click with her [indicating third person in room] [laughs]. You see, I don’t want to lose her. I want to keep her always.

BT: Oh, of course.

RH: She is special. Well, anyway, what were we on?

BT: We were talking about a professor who was tough, but got along well with women.

RH: But got along very fine with us, yes. And I think they . . . I'm not trying to be funny. I think the men were jealous [laughs]. I think they wanted to be the ones that were kind of recognized in class. And he did give the women a chance to talk about their programs.

BT: Right, right. So, I know – and this was still the case when I was in school – girls took gym with girls. There was no coed gym ever that I ever saw. So, did the men who were going through the master's program, did they have the same classes or did they have different classes as the women?

RH: We had the same classes.

BT: Okay, okay. So, you were all learning the same thing. You were just working with your own gender.

RH: But I was in a lot of – down at IU – a lot of classes with the men, honey. Because when we would study about the history of our field and all that, that wasn't anything that had to be coeducation. You know, men with men and women with women.

BT: Okay, yeah, that makes perfect sense. When is the last time you visited IU?

RH: Oh, gosh . . . when, when, when . . . you got me there, honey.

BT: A long time.

RH: It's been a long time, yes. It's been a long time.

BT: So, when you finished your master's, tell me a little bit about your career after leaving IU. Did you go back to teaching in South Bend?

RH: Mmhhh. I went to James Monroe School, and I stayed there for 35 years. Same job, same gym, same equipment, except we painted a few circles on the wall and did a few other decorations and we got a new ladder.

BT: Oh, good deal. Okay. That's important.

Third Person: 35 years, Ramona.

BT: Every now and again, a new ball [laughs].

Third Person: Did you get any new balls or anything?

RH: Oh, yeah. I tell you, I had a nice office right off the gym. I had a nice teacher's office there. And in there, we had big . . . what do I want to say? Where we kept, not a counter, but where we kept the balls and where we kept all the ropes.

BT: Like a locker?

RH: Yeah, but—

BT: —A locker room or a cabinet? Closet?

RH: Yeah, we kept all the balls, and our record player was in there and all our records. We had a nice supply of records, I will say. We had a lovely supply of dance records. Oh, and my kids loved to march.

And I think I renovated the art of marching, so that when the kids got to Riley High School and they told them they wanted to teach them how they do the grand march, my little kids spoke up and said, "Oh, we all already know how to do that," because the kids loved to march.

And it was an old-fashioned tactic, we marched forever, but there's something that a marching tune does to you. Honey, it revs you up and you just, before you know it, you're not only marching. You're lifting your feet high.

Third Person: Do you want to sit up, my love?

RH: I think I'd like to move something. I don't know what's my . . .

BT: No, sure. Let's pause for a second. So, you said you taught radio as well?

RH: Yes, I was a radio teacher for 15 years at least until I retired, and then my boss at the radio station told me that I wasn't getting any pay for it, but in my retirement, I still was teaching classes over the radio. That was for schools that did not have a specialized gym teacher.

And we had a radio station called Listen and Do, and I was active on that for 15 years and he said that I was on it for a good many years afterwards for all these schools that did not have a specialized gym teacher.

And I loved it, and my name was Ms. Janet on the radio. And I asked him why I couldn't be Ms. Ramona, and he said to me, "Now listen. Ms. Janet. Ms. Ramona. Which do you think you like the sound of better?" I said, "Ms. Janet."

BT: I'll be darned.

RH: And so, I chose my own name. I mean, I got to make a choice there, so I was known as Ms. Janet for all those years then that I was a radio teacher. Of course, I never gave up being the gym teacher in my own school.

And before I quit school, they were not able to get a gym teacher, a qualified gym teacher, in Hamilton School. And Hamilton School was in a neighborhood that was quite ritzy and glitzy, and they needed—they had to have a regular gym teacher.

So, in my later years and in my last years, I was put over in Hamilton School because the fathers that be from somewhere demanded that they have a regular gym teacher, not just something over the radio. So, I went over there and taught there for half a day, and then came back and taught in my own school. I called it my own school.

The other school, I always felt . . . I was liked over there and the faculty was nice, but I always felt the good old days, Monroe was my home. And did I tell you now that I even have some pupils that come to see me?

BT: Do they? Wonderful.

RH: They come. I have one, two, three, four. I have five of my pupils that still come to see me and they not only graduate—I not only had them as grade school pupils at Monroe School, they went on to college. They became teachers, and they went back to Monroe School, and they became teachers at Monroe School.

BT: Oh, how wonderful.

RH: And now, they are retired. I can't believe, honey, I can't believe I am this old [laughs]. Do you know? I don't know how you're supposed to feel, but it is the God's truth, I don't feel old.

BT: Well, you don't act old either [laughs], so why should you feel old?

Third Person: Sometimes I tease her about knowing Abraham Lincoln [laughs].

RH: Yes, she does.

Third Person: And then, I say, "So what was it like on the day when Moses parted the Red Sea?"

RH: Yes, she does. She's always teasing me about . . . someday, you're going to grow old.

Third Person: I pray to the Lord I'm 101 one day.

BT: If I could be 101 like this, yes.

Third Person: Absolutely. Soon to be 102.

RH: As I say, I don't feel old. I really don't. I hope I never do because I'm having such a good time now. If this is what growing old is, I mean, I'm having a good time at it.

BT: Excellent. I'm glad to hear it.

Third Person: And, my sweet love, you don't act old.

BT: No, you don't.

Third Person: You can act old at 70.

BT: So, how did your master's degree change you, change your career, change the way you taught? How did it influence you?

RH: Well, honey, I can't say that it made a great deal of change, except to make you feel a little bit like, "Oh, I've got my master's degree. Have you?" "No." And I'm not proud of trying to blow up about it because I had so many wonderful teachers who had their master's, and I had a few wonderful teachers who even had work on their doctorate's

degree. And I may say that—well, when I was at the University of Toledo . . . that was my desire was to be able to start work on my doctor's degree.

BT: Oh, okay. When was that?

RH: Oh gosh, when I was in my forties or early fifties. See, I quit when I was 62. It must have been when I was in my . . . oh, hell . . . well, I had to be in my forties, of course. Well, one of the fun things I wanted to tell you was that at one of our national conventions in physical education, which I think they held in Indianapolis, they had a demonstration on . . . what are these things that you throw, like a . . .

Third Person: Parachute?

RH: Parachute, yes. That's right.

BT: Oh, I used to love that.

RH: Yes, yes. Well, see, and then we had this one demonstration, so I thought, "Oh my gosh, that sounds like fun for my class." So, I tried to find out more about it, and I found out that we could get them. We could get those parachutes for \$5 a parachute from the government.

And so, we got—that's one thing I think I did nice for the school city. I got my parachutes, and I asked for two parachutes because they were \$5 a parachute and I knew we could afford that. So, we brought them back and we started doing parachutes at Monroe School, and so I told some of the other teachers about them.

I said, "You can get these parachutes for \$5 a parachute from the government." So, some of the other schools began to get parachutes, and so before you know it, a lot of the other schools had their \$5 parachutes.

So, one time, we were asked to do a program out at Notre Dame, and we got all the schools that had parachutes, and there must have been about . . . must've had about six parachutes out there on the Notre Dame gym floor, and it was quite a sight.

And when they all would go up together and then come down, and they'd turn around and hide underneath the parachutes, and then it would be those lovely parachutes all over the floor. Well, they'd get quite a hand clap for it. Well, it just tickled them to death. And this one school—do you mind if I tell this? It's not a dirty story.

Third Person: Well, all right, just clean stories.

RH: Well, this one little boy—this one teacher taught an almost black . . . she said that when they were practicing on it, because she had mostly black kids, she says, "They were just ornerier than heck." She said, "I could've plugged them all."

But she said, "When they got through out there at Notre Dame, they did their part just beautifully. They did their balloon—or their parachute just beautifully." So, this one little boy comes up to her after it's all over with and he says, "Ms. Needle, did we done good?" She said, "Yeah, Tommy, you did good. You did very good."

She says, he just danced away so happy. But they did. They did their part very, very well, and they got quite a hand. Because, well, it did look pretty with all those parachutes all over that gym floor.

And when they threw them all up at the very last, and got down and hid underneath them, well, of course, people clapped and clapped and that just tickled the kids to death because they just loved to perform. Even my little white kids loved to perform. And I have to say, they never made me anything but proud.

BT: Wonderful. So what does IU mean to you?

RH: What?

BT: What does IU mean to you?

RH: It means a lot to me. I'm very, very proud to say I have my master's degree from IU. It makes me extremely proud. I've never once been ashamed. I went to the University of Colorado for two summers. And . . . oh, let's see . . . Ball State, Colorado,

IU, University of Toledo, and I went to another one over there I can't remember. It was a little college. Ohio University, I think they called it. Is that all?

BT: Well, my last question is: if a new student were starting at IU, what one piece of advice would you give to him or her?

RH: Well, don't go down with the idea of going down to play. Go down to IU with the idea that you're going to work because you could go down and mess up your life, but then, you could also go down and go through your courses at IU. And I have never been ashamed.

BT: Wonderful. Thank you so much. Did you have anything else you would like to add?

RH: Well, I've got a good life [laughs].

BT: I'm glad to hear that. It sounds like you have. And still have a good life.

RH: And I still have me a good life.

BT: I'm glad to hear it.

RH: And I'm so glad I live here.

BT: Well, it's been an absolute pleasure to meet you. Let me turn these things off. Thank you so much, Ramona.

RH: Well, thank you, dear.