

An Interview with

## **Virginia Snyder**

at Greene County Extension Center in  
Springfield, Missouri

**23 March 2012**

interviewed by Dr. Virginia Laas



### **Oral History Program**

The State Historical Society of Missouri

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One-room Schoolhouse

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## PREFACE

Virginia Snyder was born near Ash Grove, Missouri in 1925, and grew up on a farm in Lawrence County. She attended a one-room schoolhouse called Lawrenceburg for her first year, then proceeded to Independence Number One, another one-room schoolhouse, for her subsequent seven years. It was in eighth grade that Snyder's passion for teaching was founded after being allowed to help other students in the class. After graduating from the eighth grade Snyder went on to attend Ash Grove high school for four years. When she graduated she received a scholarship to Southwest Missouri State (now Missouri State University) and was offered a teaching position in a one-room schoolhouse called Union Hall as long as she attended school in the summer.

Upon completing her state exam and receiving a temporary certificate, Snyder taught at Union Hall (two years), Onward (six years) (this was the last one-room schoolhouse she taught in), and the consolidated school of Halltown (three years). Snyder then received her degree in elementary education and went on to teach at Westport elementary, a low economic school, in Springfield (thirty-one years). She also continued her education eventually receiving a master's in education. Virginia Snyder retired in 1986. She now owns and operates Snyder Music Park located on her dad's old farm.

The interview was taped on a CompactFlash card, using a Marantz PMD-660 digital recorder and an audio-technica AT825 microphone placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [ ] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets [  ]. Any use of parentheses ( ) indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [" "] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [   ] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [   (??) ] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Sean Rost.



Narrator: Virginia Snyder  
Interviewer: Virginia Laas  
Date: March 23, 2012  
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

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**[Begin Interview.]**

**[Begin Track 1.]**

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Laas: My name is Virginia Laas and I'm a trustee for the State Historical Society of Missouri. I'm here today, March 23, 2012, in Springfield, Missouri, at the Greene County Extension Center to interview Virginia Snyder about her experience attending and teaching in a one-room schoolhouse. So let's get started, Virginia. Why don't you tell me when and where you were born.

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Snyder: I was born out in the country near Ash Grove, Missouri, 1925. Near a little place called Lawrenceburg.

Laas: Tell me a little about your family. Brothers and sisters?

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Snyder: My family are all gone. I had one brother, Glen Junior Snyder. And my father was Freddie Glen Snyder. My mother was Mary Lorene Snyder. And we were a close-knit family. But I've lost them all. And I'm the last leaf on the tree. But I'm trying to preserve history.

Laas: Very good. When and where did you start school?

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Snyder: I started to school at a little one-room school called Lawrenceburg the first year. And because there was tuition, I had to be changed to Independence Number One, which was a country school about two miles from where we lived.

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Laas: Both of them were—

Snyder: Both of them were—

Laas: One-room schools.

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Snyder: One-room schools. And I walked to school. My little brother and I walked to school every day about two miles.

Laas: What did you do when it got—when the winter was bad?

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Snyder: Well, when the weather was bad, my dad would walk us to school. Or sometimes he'd take the wagon. I can remember when it was a big snow on, I didn't want to miss a day

of school. I just loved school. And he wrapped our legs with gunny sacks and tied them with binder twine. And we'd take that two-mile walk to school. And then he'd come after us in the evening and wrap our legs again and we'd start back, back to our home there in, near the little Lawrenceburg area.

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Laas: How old were you when you started school?

Snyder: I was six years old and would have been seven in December, because my birthday is in December, December the twenty-seventh. So I was a little bit older than some of the children when I started to the country school. But I loved that walk to the school, especially in the spring when everything was blooming out. I think I received an education just on that two-mile walk to school. Seeing the leaves float down from the trees and looking in the water and seeing the minnows in the little spring branch that we always crossed. So I think I really thought it was wonderful that I received an education just walking to and from school.

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Laas: Did you walk in a group? Were there several of you that walked together?

Snyder: Sometimes there would be others that walked. Sometimes it would just be my brother and I.

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Laas: Was he older than you?<sup>1</sup>

Snyder: Along the way, we'd meet some other children walking to school. So we enjoyed playing along the way, too.

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Laas: Can you describe what the school looked like? Inside? How it was set up inside?

Snyder: The school had a long bench when you walked in. Long bench on the inside the windows. There were about three windows on each side of the school and two at the end. And we walked in and we had a long bench where we placed our—some of them were lard buckets that we carried our lunch in. We placed our lunch buckets on that long bench and then there was hooks to hang our coats on, on the other end. And we hung them over there. And about five rows of double seats. When I attended the one-room school, the desks were double. And always—

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Laas: Next to each other.

Snyder: —next to each other, uh huh. And always tried to sit with my girlfriend. We had the double seat that where we sat together. And then there was this long blackboard on the, it'd be the, let's see, the north side of the building. It went all the way across. And then at the end there was a bookcase that had a limited amount of books. And I remember the bookmobile came. We were able to get more books from the bookmobile. And then at the south end of the building, there was this big old potbellied stove, and a big coal bucket. And the teacher had to keep that coal bucket filled. Sometimes she'd send one of the older boys out to fill up

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Snyder's brother was younger than her.

the bucket to keep the fire going all day. And her desk was on the south end, also. And the lights were not electric then. They were kerosene, I guess you'd call it.

5 Laas: Okay. So you did have kerosene lights in there?

Snyder: Mm-hm. When I went to—this was when I attended a one-room school.

10 Laas: I think you've made this pretty clear, but the building sat north and south and the windows were on the east and west?

Snyder: The windows were north and south. And there was one at the—wait a minute. The windows were east and west.

15 Laas: Yeah. East and west. So you got the benefit—

Snyder: We got the light. Light's supposed to come over your left shoulder, I think.

Laas: The desks, then—

20 Snyder: They were faced, they were faced—

Laas: Toward the blackboard?

25 Snyder: No, they didn't face the blackboard. They were facing the—

Laas: The teacher?

30 Snyder: The teacher. Which the teacher's desk was on the, let me think, it'd be the south, south end. Everybody had a tin cup and we had a place to hang our cups. And at one side there was the water container where you pushed a little button and received a drink of water.

Laas: Was there a well outside?

35 Snyder: Yes. There was a well outside at the end of the playground. And the teacher always fill that up before she started the class each morning.

Laas: And what about the toilets?

40 Snyder: Oh, I mustn't leave out the toilets.

Laas: No. (both laugh)

45 Snyder: There was two toilets. And one on—I'm picturing them in my mind—one of them was on the north end of the playground, north and, north and west. And the other one was on the east and the north. And they were, we had a Sears and Roebuck catalog for paper. And two holes cut in each one. And sometimes you had a neighbor, a wasp for a neighbor, when

you went in there. You had to always check to be sure there was no wasp or a wasp's nest. I think the teacher tried to keep those wasp's nests cleared out.

5 Laas: And that was part of her job, too.

Snyder: She was custodian, too. A teacher has many, wears many hats, you know. She was the custodian and the teacher and a nurse.

10 Laas: Right. Does the school building still exist today?

Snyder: It's there but they've made it into a house. But the pump's still there. The only thing that's left, I guess, that's not being used, is that pump. They don't use that pump. I think they drilled a different well. But as I drive by there, I always see that old pump. And the schoolhouse is there, but it's been made into a house. It was called Independence Number  
15 One. Or a nickname, Lickskillet. And I never have been able to find out why it was called Lickskillet.

Laas: Lickskillet? How many students went to that school?

20 Snyder: There was probably thirty to thirty-five. We had a big school.

Laas: Do you have any idea how big the room was?

Snyder: It was huge. This one was huge. But I just don't know how many feet it was. It was  
25 a huge room. Because it had, usually they seated the first, second, and third grade on one side and then from fourth grade on up on another side. The fourth grade—

**[End Track 1. Begin Track 2.]**

30 Snyder: —on up, I think, was near the blackboard.

Laas: How many were in your class when you— in any of those years?

Snyder: Usually four or five. Some classes had just one. Some would have two. And maybe  
35 the sixth graders, there will be six. And they all learn from each other, hearing the others recite their lessons.

Laas: You felt that was a good learning experience.

40 Snyder: I thought that was a good learning experience. I went to school there eight years. And as I became older, I remember my teacher, Miss Amogene, a wonderful teacher, when I was eighth grade, she let me help the other students. I'd read to them, or listen to them read, or drill them on their addition facts. Back then we had to memorize our multiplication tables and our addition facts. And she'd let me drill them. And I guess that planted a seed for me to  
45 want to become a teacher, because she was such a good role model.

Laas: Tell me her name again.

Snyder: Miss Amogene Fortner.

5 Laas: Can you spell her name?

Snyder: A-m-o-g-e-n-e. F-o-r-t-n-e-r. She was a great musician and I love music. And I always looked forward to the singing we always had on Friday afternoon. And she was such a wonderful lady. And I remember she took me home with her one time. She was a great  
10 teacher, too. She was young. I remember my dad was on the school board. And he helped hire her—let’s see, I think she was there about three years.

Laas: Since you’ve been a teacher and you look back on her experience, what were the things about her teaching style that were so appealing?  
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Snyder: She was so helpful. She did a lot of teaching from the blackboard, but she also helped individuals. She helped individually if they were having a problem. I remember that. And she was so kind. And she had so much patience. I think you have to have a lot of  
20 patience to be a good teacher. And I think she was teaching more than the three Rs. She was teaching children attitudes and how to behave. And what was important about living. She was really teaching living.

Laas: What about special activities? Special programs you had at the school?

25 Snyder: We had a lot of special things. We always had a Halloween party. And the community always joined in and loved to come to the things we had. And then, of course, we had a big Christmas program and that was always a highlight of the year. And every child was in the program. And even the little ones that came to visit sometimes they gave them a  
30 little speech. And so the Christmas program was a wonderful highlight and always ended with a nativity scene. Then the other one was the pie supper. And since I love music and my dad and I sang so much together, we always entertained at the pie supper.

Laas: What kind of songs did you sing?

35 Snyder: When I was even eight years old when we first started. He taught me to play the guitar, and so we sang at the pie suppers. It seemed like we always sang at every pie supper that we had, and auctioned pies off to buy necessary things for the school.

Laas: Did both of you play guitar and sing?  
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Snyder: Mm-hm. Both of us.

Laas: What kind of songs did you sing?

Snyder: We just sang folk songs and country songs and gospel songs. And we still, we did that up to when he passed away. We sang all over the community, everywhere. And I built this music park.<sup>2</sup>

5 Laas: Okay.

Snyder: Later I built this music park. After he passed away. His family was very musical, and my grandmother was musical. She taught in singing schools when she was young. And played the organ. And all her brothers played fiddle. So I grew up in a musical family.

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Laas: Can you tell me the names of some of the songs you sang?

Snyder: If I can think of—one is “The Little One-Roomed Schoolhouse.” And, let’s see. I’m trying to think of the old ones that we used to do. “Molly Darling.” “Sail Along, Silvery Moon.” And of course a lot of the old old songs. “Dixie,” that were in the Golden Book of Songs. “Old Black Joe.” “Oh, Susannah.” Just a lot of old songs.

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Laas: Mm-hm. Was he a bass? A baritone?

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Snyder: He was a tenor and he had a beautiful voice.

Laas: And you?

Snyder: I sang lead and I also sang tenor and alto. And I’m still singing today, at my age.

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Laas: That’s wonderful.

Snyder: And I make talks around about the one-room school. You know, at different communities. Then I sing this old song about the one-room school.

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Laas: What about, how did you organize the pie suppers? How did that go?

Snyder: The pie supper. Well, all the ladies brought a pie. And they decorated them as beautiful as they could, because they wanted to entice their boyfriend maybe. So they auctioned the pies off to the highest bidder. And the boy that bought the pie or man he’d eat with the girl, you know, at the end of the program. But they always also had pickles for the sweetest couple, and penny a vote and soap for the dirtiest feet and there were other things I can’t think of what all they were. But my dad and I entertained before the pie supper started.

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Laas: I see. Did they put the pies in boxes and decorate the boxes?

Snyder: They decorated the boxes.

Laas: Okay. And did the boys usually, or the men usually know whose pie they were bidding on?

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<sup>2</sup> Virginia Snyder built the Snyder Music Park in memory of her father.

Snyder: They sometimes slipped around and tried to find out which pie was their girlfriend's. And they really would have quite a contest. Sometimes a pie would bring fifty dollars. And they used the money to buy equipment for that one-room school.

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Laas: Speaking of equipment, did you have any playground equipment?

Snyder: We had swings.

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Laas: Swings.

Snyder: Not a lot of equipment. We had swings and a sliding board. But in the first schools, we didn't have a sliding board. At Independence, where I first got my eight years of education, there were no sliding boards or no swings. So we just played organized games.

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Laas: One thing I wanted to go back to, that you'd mentioned that the Lawrenceburg school was a subscription school?

Snyder: No, it wasn't.

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Laas: A tuition school?

Snyder: I just went there because it was close to home. But then they were going to charge tuition and my dad moved us then to the district that we really lived in.

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Laas: Okay.

Snyder: But the subscription schools were the first schools in America.

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Laas: Uh-huh. Did you just go a few months to Lawrenceburg—

Snyder: No, I went a whole year there.

Laas: A whole year there?

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Snyder: First year.

Laas: Okay.

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Snyder: My teacher's name was Miss Wilma. And I remember my first day, I had a pink hat. My mother walked me to school and I had this pretty pink straw hat. And when I got to the door, a boy named Gurney Lowe grabbed my hat and ran away with my hat. And I cried and cried. And Miss Wilma, she was a wonderful teacher, too. She finally got the boy back in the room and got my hat back. But I just remember him taking my hat. And I was just broken

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hearted.

Laas: How far was that from your home?

Snyder: It was just about a mile. And then we transferred to Independence Number One, or Lickskillet, they were called.

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Laas: Lickskillet. Gosh. Can you tell me some about the games you played during recess?

Snyder: Games? We played Red Rover and Flying Dutchman—

10 **[End Track 2. Begin Track 3.]**

Snyder: —and Drop the Handkerchief. And our favorite one was Annie Over. We loved to play Annie Over. And Black Man.

15 Laas: Can you describe Black Man, how that was played?

Snyder: We chose up sides. And there was one side on one end, one on the other. The person in the middle that was, they called “it,” the one that was the—and then they, one side would run through. And this person that was it would catch as many as he could. And then all those  
20 would go on the side that he came from. And then there’s more out in the middle to catch more people now. So the other side would run through. And they’d touch them and catch as many as they could. And the one that got the most on the side was the winner.

Laas: Do you know why it was called Black Man?

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Snyder: I don't know why it's called Black Man.

Laas: Several people have mentioned that game.

30 Snyder: Mm-hm. Flying Dutchman, we played that a lot.

Laas: How did you play Flying Dutchman?

Snyder: Well, we got in a big circle. And two people were chosen to walk around, they  
35 joined hands, two people would walk around the circle and they'd pick out or they'd hit the hands in the between two people. And when they hit the hands, that couple would run and try to beat them back to that place. Whoever got back first got in there and then they were it, they were the one that was the—would go around and hit someone else.

40 Laas: Did they run in opposite ways around the circle? To get back to that?

Snyder: I think they, I think they all went the same direction. And we played hopscotch a lot.

Laas: Mm-hm. Jacks?

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Snyder: And Jacks. That was an indoor game.

Laas: When the weather was bad?

5 Snyder: When the weather was bad, we usually had ciphering matches or spelling bees or things like that. We didn't have any games, but I remember they drew a circle on the board and you'd try to hit the circle. I forgot what we used to hit that circle. And let's see, what else did we play? I guess we just, mostly we had ciphering matches and singings and that kind of thing at recess inside.

10 Laas: What time did school start?

Snyder: Always nine o'clock. And we were dismissed at four o'clock.

Laas: And did you have a morning recess and an afternoon?

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Snyder: We had a morning recess of 15 minutes. And the noon hour was an hour. We were back in the classroom by one. And then afternoon recess of 15 minutes. The noon hour was usually a ballgame. We played a lot of ball outside. I remember—

20 Laas: So you had bats and—

Snyder: What?

Laas: You had bats?

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Snyder: We had bats and a ball. And most everybody played that ballgame.

Laas: Boys and girls?

30 Snyder: What?

Laas: Boys and girls?

35 Snyder: Boys and girls. Some of them didn't play, they'd play hopscotch on the porch or, you know, those that didn't want to play.

Laas: How big was the porch of the school?

40 Snyder: Well, it didn't cover the whole school. I couldn't tell you how many feet but it had a roof over it and everything, and steps to go up. I remember one of the things that we always enjoyed was to be chosen to dust the erasers. And we'd go out and dust them on the porch or a big old rock that was out there. Everybody wanted to get the job of dusting the erasers, you know, to go below the blackboard.

45 Laas: Right. And was another job cleaning the blackboard?

Snyder: Yea, we had that job, too. Cleaning at the end of the day. We liked to do that.

Laas: And that was an honor.

5 Snyder: It was an honor to help the teacher.

Laas: What did you usually take for lunch?

10 Snyder: Well, we were a loving family and had a lot of love in our family, but we weren't rich. We kind of had a hard time. Sometimes we'd take an egg sandwich between my mother's beautiful little biscuits. She made beautiful biscuits. And so we usually had a biscuit and an egg sandwich, or my dad always killed a hog. And we'd have tenderloin that'd go between the biscuits. But I remember I felt a little sad when I'd see, there were two or three people that had light bread. But we always had biscuits. But a student told me one time that  
15 she remembered me bringing those pretty little biscuits and said she just envied me having those biscuits because they were so smooth and pretty. Even though she had light bread, she still envied me for having those beautiful little biscuits. And we usually mostly just had—once in a while I think my dad would buy peanut butter and we'd have peanut butter between bread. But I don't think we ever had light bread. We just had mother's biscuits. But what a  
20 beautiful memory that was.

Laas: Now, tell me what you mean by light bread.

25 Snyder: It's just bread that's—

Laas: A loaf of bread.

30 Snyder: A loaf of bread. We called it light bread. And we could buy it at the little store, at Lawrenceburg for ten cents a loaf. Only we didn't have much of that. Sometimes we'd have some fruit in our lunch, but nothing—Mother would make a cake. She liked to bake. We'd have cake.

Laas: And you graduated from the eighth grade from—

35 Snyder: I graduated from eighth grade at Independence Number One, or Licksillet we called it. Then I went to Ash Grove High School for four years. And I missed the one-room school. But I worked hard at the high school. And Mr. Quarles was my superintendent. A wonderful guy. And I wrote a story one time, what it takes to be a real person. And I remember walking in the study hall. He was reading it to the student body. And I still have  
40 that story somewhere at home. He told me I should become a teacher. And so when I graduated from high school, I received a scholarship to SMS, but I went ahead and took the school. The school board, which consisted of three men, came over to my dad's house and asked me if I would take their school, which was about six miles away. And of course I was thrilled to be able to get a job teaching right out of high school. I was seventeen going on  
45 eighteen.

Laas: What was the name of that high school?

Snyder: Ash Grove High.

5 Laas: Oh not— What was the name of the one-room school that you taught in?

Snyder: Union Hall.

Laas: And they sought you out.

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Snyder: Pardon?

Laas: They sought you out.

15 Snyder: They sought me out and asked me. Anyway, I had a good average, you know, in high school. I had mostly A's. And I guess they thought I was a good student. Anyway, I think Mr. Quarles, maybe they talked to him.

Laas: Q-u-a-

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Snyder: Q-u-a-r-l-e-s. He was a music teacher, and also, the superintendent. So anyway, they came to my house and asked me if I would take their school. And I was thrilled to do it. You had to pass the county exam in order to teach then, and make a promise to go to summer school. So I went to Mount Vernon. And Mr. Henry was the superintendent. And I remember  
25 him being there. And I took this exam. And I made past ninety. So—

Laas: It was a county exam, not a state exam?

Snyder: I guess it was a state exam.

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Laas: But you took it at the county seat.

Snyder: I took it at the county seat at Mount Vernon. So they gave me a temporary  
35 certificate. So I saved my money that first year, teaching at Union Hall. And started my career of going to school every summer. I'd teach, go to school, teach, go to school. And I'd go the spring term, summer term, and the August term at Southwest Missouri State College. And it took me ten years, but I received my degree that way. And then I went on to get my master's the same way. And I went to Drury and received my master's degree. And got some  
40 hours on a specialization—

**[End Track 3. Begin Track 4.]**

Snyder: —certificate in reading. I taught reading after I became to Springfield I taught  
45 reading. I just love teaching reading.

Laas: So the one-room school started in August?

Snyder: It usually started the last week in August.

Laas: And then when did it end in the spring?

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Snyder: April. And I would start, get out in time to go to the spring term at SMS.

Laas: Mm hmm. And you'd go spring and summer?

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Snyder: I'd go spring, and that'd be the end of it, and then the summer term, I think, was July. And then I'd go to the August term, just five hours. I got five hours in the spring, ten hours in summer, and five hours in August. I did that for ten years and I got my degree that way. I didn't have a car. I didn't have a car when I was teaching. I rode with my dad, who was a R.E.A. [Rural Electrification Administration], he was a lineman on the R.E.A. So he'd

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take me by that one-room school. And I was custodian. And I'd get there early and get everything ready and teach all day. And then I'd clean up in the evening and sweep and get the coal in, clean the restrooms. And he'd pick me up when he came home from work. So I did that for two years there, and then I transferred to Onward School and taught six years there.

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Laas: Onward? O-n-

Snyder: O-n-w-a-r-d. And I just loved Onward.

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Laas: Let me go back to your education just a little bit. Your degree was in elementary ed.?

Snyder: Elementary and I got a principal's certificate.

Laas: Principal's certificate and a reading—

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Snyder: Master's in education.

Laas: Master's in education. Doing it three terms a year.

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Snyder: Pardon?

Laas: Doing it three terms a year and teaching—

Snyder: Yeah. That's the way I did it. But I'm glad I did. I think it made me appreciate life.

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Laas: So you went to Onward—

Snyder: After I left—

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Laas: Union Hall?

Snyder: Union Hall. I got a little bigger salary when I went to Onward. And it was a place where my dad could drop me off and pick me up. So I taught there six years. And then they started talking consolidation. And so then I moved to Halltown and taught three years. It was a, it wasn't a one-room school but it had I think four classes. And then Dr. Rucker, who is listed in the state course of study, I got an old state course of study that I had when I was teaching, which I followed and be sure that I was teaching the right thing. Although I think the best teacher was my chalkboard and a piece of chalk on that blackboard. But I still had the state course of study. Well, Dr. Rucker helped make that state course of study. He's from Springfield. He came down to Halltown and observed my teaching. And I decided I should try to do something, come to Springfield, although I hated to leave the community. But I came to Springfield and I taught 31 years in Springfield.

Laas: What school?

Snyder: Westport. It was a low economic school. But I just loved the school because I understood the children. I understood their feelings. Because I grew up not having a lot. And I think it's important to build their self-concept. And so I tried to build their self-concept and love them even if they were ragged and barefooted. There was one family that lived in a house that had a dirt floor. And I took one of those little girls home with me one time. I mean, I just understood those kids. So maybe that's why they placed me there, but that's where they placed me. I taught there 31 years. I had 42 years all together with the country school.

Laas: How did you, in those one-room schools, how did you manage to take care of all those children in all those different grades? (laughs)

Snyder: Well I just, I didn't have any discipline problems. I think they loved me. (laughs) I just assigned work for them to do. And then I'd call, we had a recitation bench—what they call recitation bench, long bench. It worked for them to do seat work and that's why I stayed so late at night and early in the morning. And then I'd take one class up and work with the first grade. And they'd be working back there. And then send the first grade back and give them seat work to do. Something they could do. And then bring the next class up. And did that up until, I guess it was the fifth grade. And then we called it the A and B class. The B class was fifth and sixth—wait a minute. The fourth and fifth grade, I was trying to remember here. And the A class was seventh and eighth grade. Then sometimes the older students would help those that needed help. And I'd assign those that were nice students, you know, to help the little ones. So they all learned from each other. But I never had any problem with discipline. Everybody was busy and they seemed to want to please. And I just kept them busy doing different things. Like, they had math to do, and so they'd get their math ready. And maybe reading sheets, opposites, opposite words or the Dolch Word List and different things like that.

Laas: If you did have a discipline problem, what did you do with that child? (both laugh)

Snyder: I didn't put their nose in the ring, I did not do that. I'd have them stand by the wall outside at playtime and talk to them, you know.

Laas: No paddles? No switches?

5 Snyder: I never paddled anybody. I paddled one child at Westport one time. Not paddled. I just swatted him on the seat because he was disturbing the whole room. But at the country school, I never had to paddle anyone. We just were all one big loving bunch of children. And I see some of those kids today and they always come up and hug me and say, “You were my favorite teacher.” And so that, since I don’t have any children of my own, that really made me feel like it’s all worthwhile.

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Laas: Right. How would you compare the education children received in those one-room schoolhouses compared to when you were teaching at Westport, you know? Were in a school with more than one teacher?

15 Snyder: I think they learned as much because they received a lot of individual attention. And they were taught a lot of values other than just reading, writing and arithmetic. And a lot of them became successful later. Valedictorian in their class in high school. And a lot of them in the Springfield schools have too. But I think in my heart, I feel that the one-room school did a wonderful job. And they were country people. Because the one-room school is country.  
20 And it was a great part of the foundation of education in this country. It started in seventeen hundred and something, and went up until the 1940s when they were consolidated. And it gave the foundation of education in this country. And they taught traditions and values and pledge to the flag and—

25 Laas: That was one thing we didn’t get to. How you started the day. Pledge to the flag?

Snyder: We always started the day with pledge to the flag. And we’d go outside and there’d be one child chosen, different times to be in charge of raising the flag. They always wanted to be the one that did that. And we’d say the pledge to the flag, and then we’d have the  
30 Lord’s Prayer outside. Then we went in the classroom. And sometimes we’d have even a song. And sometimes we’d have Bible verses on Monday. That’s the way I did it. And I just think that a lot of values were taught in the country school that aren’t today. Because they aren’t allowed to anymore. And traditions and things that are passed on down. It’s a part of our heritage. And I think we should preserve our heritage and take some threads from the  
35 past and weave them into the future. And I’m doing that.

**[End Track 4. Begin Track 5.]**

40 Snyder: That’s what I’ve been doing with the little one-room school that I restored. I restored one at my park.

Laas: Oh, did you?

Snyder: Um-hm.

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Laas: Is it an original one-room—

Snyder: It's original. And it's there now.

Laas: Where is it?

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Snyder: It's down by Lawrenceburg, where I grew up, on my dad's farm. It's called Little Moore. And I had it moved. They say they can't be registered if they've been moved. I wish it could've been. But my cousin had it on his property and he was going to destroy it. So he said I could have it. So I had it moved over to my music park. I have a music park. I had it moved over there. And the foundation is made from rocks from my grandmother's old log house. I had all those rocks hauled over there and had a parent from Westport school where I taught. He came and built the foundation. And I had this little school moved over and put on that foundation. And then I had a carpenter from Fair Grove who helped restore that old mill down there at Fair Grove. He came over and restored it for me. And this little one-room school is where my mother graduated from. There were eight children, all eight children, graduated from that little one-room school. It's called Little Moore. And it used to be a little larger. But the first one burned in the 1800s. So this one was rebuilt, and is built smaller. It used to be Moore School. Because it was smaller, it's called Little Moore. And it has the original floors, the original boards on the outside. And I keep it preserved. I had a preservation fluid put on it. I'm going to have it done this year. And it has an old, old piano that was given to me by one of my students.

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Laas: When you taught in a one-room school, or when you went to one, did you have a piano in your school?

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Snyder: Yes, we did. We had a piano. And Miss Amogene played the piano beautifully. And we always had singing on Friday. And then when I went to Union Hall and then down to Onward, we did have a piano. And some of them had record players, I think. But we had a piano. And we always had singing on Friday, and they loved to sing.

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Laas: Right. Right.

Snyder: And my little school that I have at my park has a piano that belongs to one of my students. And Dr. Tabor, he gave me an old, old, old school desk that came from the basement of Westport School. So it's a beautiful old teacher's desk and chair that I have that he gave to me. Dr. Tabor was my principal for eight years. And I just loved him.

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Laas: Where was he principal? At Westport?

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Snyder: Westport, he was.

Laas: Do you have any other particular memories of your time teaching in a one-room school? Or going to it that you would like to share in this that we've kind of overlooked?

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Snyder: Well, let's see. I just loved the parents, it was a community type thing. They always, I stayed when it was really cold and my dad couldn't get there, I stayed in one of the, I stayed

in the director's home. And they were wonderful people. Mr. and Mrs. Ren Johnson. And that's a beautiful memory. And—

Laas: So they lived closer than your parents?

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Snyder: Yes. They lived close. And I loved all the parents because they just seemed to love me. And they'd come to school and we were just like one big family. And that's a beautiful memory. And another beautiful memory is that big Christmas program in the church. The first school, the Christmas program was in the schoolhouse. I mean, the first school where I taught, Union Hall. But the second school, we always had the Christmas program in the church. And the parents would all come and help me go get a Christmas tree. Or they'd go get the Christmas tree and they'd bring it in and then the children, and we'd have red paper chains that we wove together, put on the tree. Didn't have a lot of money to buy a lot of fancy Christmas decorations. We did have icicles. I always bought icicles. And we decorated that tree. And parents took part in it. And we had this big program on the stage of the church. It was the Onward Methodist Church. And we had a curtain across and the curtain was sheets put on with clothespins—not clothespins, safety pins. And we'd pull those curtains back. And each child had a part in the program. Little Johnny Garton, I remember him. He got up there and forgot his speech and had to be prompted. But every child had a part in the program.

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Laas: A part that they had to memorize?

Snyder: Had to memorize. And we'd have a little play. And at the end, we had the nativity scene. The three wise men and the shepherds and it was an hour long or longer. Everybody had a part. Everybody came in the community. It was a huge crowd. And when it was over then Santa Claus came. And I always made sacks of candy for all the children. And we passed out candy and oranges and apples to all the kids. And everybody went home with the Christmas spirit. They all felt so happy because of the program and being together. And they went home with a happy heart.

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Laas: What about some of the other special days at school? Did everybody dress up on Halloween?

Snyder: We usually dressed up and we had a Halloween party. We had a prize for whoever got the best costume, or looked the scariest.

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Laas: How did you pick the—

Snyder: We let a parent do that.

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Laas: Parents do that?

Snyder: Two or three parents. And then the last day of school was always a memorable time, you know. We had a big picnic. Everybody. And put two benches out in front of the church

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house. And covered the tables with cloths. And everybody brought food. And I've got pictures of everybody standing around that table when we had the last day picnic.

5 Laas: Now, would this be during school hours that you had the picnic?

Snyder: No, it was the last day of school. It was usually in the afternoon.

Laas: In the afternoon?

10 Snyder: Or at noon—

Laas: But parents could get off and come to this in the middle of the day?

15 Snyder: Well, most of them were farmers, you know.

Laas: Okay.

Snyder: There might have been some that were working.

20 Laas: But they could manage their chores around going to this—

Snyder: I don't know, but we had a big crowd. But I will never forget that Christmas program. Of course the other memories, the bookmobile that always came around. And we'd go out and choose our books.

25 Laas: How many books could you check out at once from the bookmobile?

Snyder: I think about 20.

30 Laas: Oh, really?

Snyder: Um-hm. And each child got to choose a book.

Laas: Okay.

35 Snyder: Maybe there was more than that. Everybody got to choose a book.

Laas: And how often would the bookmobile come?

40 Snyder: I think it was once a month. Of course, our library was limited. And I always read to the children every day at noon. And I, as I wrote in—I want to give you this story. I wrote in this story about reading *Charlotte's Web*. They loved that book. And at the end, you know, Charlotte dies. Well the kids, there'd be tears in their eyes when I read that book. I read a lot of different books. *Huckleberry Finn*. And just different old classics. I don't know whether  
45 they still have the classics in the libraries or not. I hope so.

Laas: I think so. I hope so too. What's—

Snyder: And I guess I remember teaching from the blackboard a lot. That's a memory that I cherish. I taught phonics. How to sound out words.

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Laas: Um-hm. Um-hm. It must have been a thrill to teach children to read.

Snyder: It was. It was. I loved to teach the children to read. And if you talked to Dr. Tabor, I think he'd tell you that I did my best. Then I had other good principals, too, but he was the last one I had. But I think we, I'm so glad we have this association, and I—

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**[End Track 5. Begin Track 6.]**

Snyder: —think it's our heritage. And I think the one-room school is a national icon. And we need to cherish it and young people need to know their pasts to understand their future. That's my philosophy.

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Laas: That's right. Well, thank you very much for doing this. It's been a wonderful interview and I'm so glad that you are here to talk to me. Is there anything else that we should—

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Snyder: You want to see my material?

Laas: I do. I do.

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**[End Interview.]**