

An Interview with
**Wayne L. Behymer &
Wanda Gebhardt**

at the Daniel Boone Regional Library in
Columbia, Missouri

19 September 2008



Oral History Program
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PREFACE

Wayne L. Behymer and Wanda Gebhardt were both born in Macon, Missouri. The two siblings both attended the same one-room schoolhouse, Turner Number 68, in Boone County, Missouri, during the late 1940's and early 1950's. Behymer and Gebhardt discuss some of their experiences in the one-room schoolhouse, including having the same teacher for eight consecutive years. They also discuss their mother who served as the school cook, and how she would collect money and food from all the parents and then cook the children a hot meal each day. However, no child received their lunch without having first swallowed their cod oil pill.

The siblings also describe the difficulties they had adjusting from a one-room schoolhouse consisting of roughly thirty-five students, to the much larger Jefferson Junior High School and Hickman High School in Columbia, Missouri. In addition, the two share several anecdotes such as: the burnt turkey in the school's oven, why being left-handed was causally linked to when a student started school, walking a mile to school in rain or shine, the large library at their school, the fact that they always knew they would eventually end up attending college, and the important life lessons they learned while attending a one-room schoolhouse.

The interview was taped on a 1GB 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, Jeff D. Corrigan.

Narrator: Wayne Behymer and Wanda Gebhardt

Interviewer: William Stolz

Date: September 19, 2008

Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

5

[Begin Interview.]

[Begin Track One.]

10

Stolz: Today is September 19, 2008, and this is William Stolz with the Western Historical Manuscript Collection. We're at the Daniel Boone Regional Library interviewing individuals on one-room schoolhouses. And if you both could give me your names, where you were born and when you were born.

15

Gebhardt: My name's Wanda Gebhardt. I was born in Macon, Missouri, and moved to Columbia when I was two, two-and-a-half. And lived here almost continuously until about 18 years ago.

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Behymer: And I'm Wayne Behymer. I was born in Macon County, in a little community which no longer exists called Axtel, A-x-t-e-l. I was born at home. And we moved to Columbia the first time probably in 1941, I'm guessing. And Dad was drafted into the army in 1944. We moved back to Macon County where both sets of grandparents, my grandparents, lived, and lived there till 1946. Took a short detour to California, where I

25

finished the second grade. Moved back to Boone County in 1946, and have lived here ever since.

Stolz: All right. Could you describe your home situation, what your parents did, how many siblings there were in the family.

30

Behymer: Well, we are it. My sister Wanda and myself. Dad was a career employee for the USDA [United States Department of Agriculture]. The same agency all through his career that every few years they would change the initials. Mother, for the most part, was a homemaker, although for a while she was a cook at the same one-room rural school that

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Wanda and I attended.

Stolz: Oh, fun.

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Behymer: Then later years, she went to work as a clerk for what was then called Happy House, a gift shop, downtown Columbia. Later, I think, they changed the name to Cloud Nine, but under the same management. Basically she was a homemaker most of her career.

Stolz: All right. And when and where did you start school? You mentioned you had finished second grade in California and you moved back here and started—

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Behymer: I started the first grade in Macon, Missouri. And part of the second grade as well. Short stint in second grade in California. Started third grade at Turner Number 68 here in Boone County, east of town, east of Columbia.

5 Stolz: Was it close to any towns? Was it just out in the rural area?

Behymer: The Turner school?

Stolz: Yeah, Turner school.

10

Behymer: Well, Columbia was the nearest populated area. We were close to a little community crossroads called Harg, H-a-r-g. But there was, yeah, when we lived there, there was a country store still in existence, I believe, maybe for a year or two. They were on one corner. Olivet church was on a corner. There was what we called the clubhouse, community center, on one corner. It had originally been a blacksmith shop. And then on the other corner was a family named McHarg and that's where Harg got its name from that family name.

15

Gebhardt: I started to Turner school in Boone County in 1949. First grade. And went straight through until it was reorganized into R2 in Boone County, which is now New Haven. And was the first graduating eighth grade class from there. Had the same teacher through the whole eight grades.

20

Stolz: Wow. That's unusual.

25 Gebhardt: And she was a wonderful teacher.

Stolz: Can you describe the building itself? What the building looked like, the color, type of structure?

30 Gebhardt: It was a square, red brick building. It did have a basement. It was a hole in the ground. I guess there was an exit, wasn't there?

Behymer: Yes, there was. There was an exit.

35 Gebhardt: But it had the basement. That's where we had our hot lunch program, which was very unusual for a rural school. And as Wayne alluded, Mother was the cook there for many years. She would often drive a little Farmall Cub tractor to school and each child was to bring milk to school, if they had it. Those who didn't, we had a Jersey cow that gave unending. So she would take a gallon of milk every day to school for the kids who didn't have it. So we were fortunate that we had the hot lunch.

40

Behymer: Again, Turner school was on the cutting edge of rural schools for that time. You can't really call it indoor plumbing, but we had indoor restrooms. (laughter) It was a straight shot down to the indoor—

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[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]

Behymer: --septic tank was really what it was. But we didn't have to go outside. We had running water in the basement. There was nothing more than a sink, a lavatory.

Gebhardt: That's right.

5

Behymer: Probably there was water over the kitchen.

Gebhardt: I think so.

10 Behymer: Probably so. But again, we had running water for drinking and cooking and washing hand purposes. It was cistern water. And in this day and age, it would have been condemned overnight. But back then, that's what we were used to.

15 Gebhardt: We also had central heat. There was a big furnace in the basement. Was it just the one big register that came out?

Behymer: One big, yes, right above the furnace.

20 Gebhardt: But it was central heat. We didn't have to worry about stoking a potbelly stove over in the corner.

Stolz: So you had electricity, then, in the school.

Gebhardt: Yes. Yes.

25

Behymer: Now we did not have a telephone till, gosh, I don't know if we had a telephone there in the school. Maybe in my last year or two there was a phone put in. I can't recall that. Typically, one of the eighth grade boys was hired to be the custodian. He would get there early and get the furnace going. Of course, hopefully, it left embers from the night before, so
30 it wasn't that difficult to get it started. And then he would stay late after school and clean up, sweep the floor, etcetera. But that was a paying job. Again, generally one of the eighth grade boys. Although I was the only eighth grade boy in my class, and I didn't want to do that. So it fell to one of the seventh grade boys who was willing to get the dollar a day—

35 Stolz: It was a dollar a day?

Behymer: That's what the pay was to do the fire in the furnace and the clean up.

40 Gebhardt: One morning, it was either Thanksgiving or Christmas, because we would get a lot of Department of Agriculture surplus food. And we always had a turkey. Well, Mother would put the turkey in the oven, and then it was up to the janitor, then, to turn off the oven before he left. Well, one night he forgot. Came to school the next morning. Of course, it was full of smoke. The turkey had burned. (laughter) So he, you know, got it aired out as much as possible. But there was the odor of cooked turkey for quite a while.

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Stolz: So how many kids were in your class, and then how many kids were in the school overall?

5 Gebhardt: I think there were four in my first grade class. And it would range somewhere around there. We were talking probably 30 to 35 average each year. And of course kids would move in and leave. But it was 30, 35 kids in all eight grades.

10 Behymer: There was four in my class, three girls and a boy. And Wanda mentioned about being in the first eighth grade graduating class at New Haven. Well, I was in the first eighth grade graduating class after the seven districts had consolidated. They didn't have a building yet, but it operated under the same school board. So we had the first joint graduation exercise for the seven districts. And I, there was probably a dozen of us, eighth graders from the seven districts. I don't remember for sure. But I do remember this, that our graduation speaker for that, it was a big deal, was the same one that Wanda had when she graduated five years later.

15 Stolz: Really. (laughs)

Behymer: Same, same speaker. Same speech. Same jokes. (laughter)

20 Stolz: How about your teachers? Wanda, you mentioned that you had the same teacher for all the years you were there.

Gebhardt: Yes.

25 Stolz: And Wayne, did you have the same teacher?

Behymer: Yes, uh—

30 Gebhardt: Lucy Douglas. Wonderful teacher. She was left-handed, which was a plus for me, because I was left-handed. But she had beautiful handwriting. She was also good at art and music. So we were fortunate – Wayne may disagree – we were fortunate in that we could have music and art whenever we wanted to. Whereas the other schools in the district had to wait for the roving teacher like once a month. So if there was a rainy or snowy lunch hour, we might just sit around the piano and sing. Whereas the other schools did not have that
35 opportunity.

40 Behymer: The county had a fine arts teacher, supervisor. I guess teacher wasn't it, [name unclear]. She would rotate, go around the county, maybe a half day at each school, doing the artsy, music bit. And as Wanda said, many times those schools did not have that opportunity, whereas we did.

45 Gebhardt: Mrs. Douglas taught all seven years at Turner. And then when we formed New Haven, she taught the seventh and eighth grade. So I was able to maintain, had her my last year, also.

[End Track Two. Begin Track Three.]

Gebhardt: And then, not too many years thereafter, she went to Jefferson Junior here in Columbia and taught.

5 Behymer: She was a reading specialist, I believe, at Jeff Junior. But Wanda started school earlier than she should have.

Stolz: Oh, really?

10 Behymer: Her birthday is in February. And typically, back then, September, I believe, was the breaking point. If your birthday was after September first, you would wait till the following year. If there was—particularly in the rural schools, exceptions were made. Well, [an] exception was made for Wanda. Because Mrs. Douglas was left-handed. The folks wanted Wanda to start first grade with a left-handed teacher. They thought it would benefit
15 her. I guess it did. So she was probably one of the youngest in your high school class, particularly.

Gebhardt: Oh, yes.

20 Behymer: Because essentially she started to school—

Gebhardt: I was five.

25 Behymer: --in order to get the benefit of Mrs. Douglas. Now another thing, besides being a left-handed writer, it was feared that Mrs. Douglas could go into Columbia, because she was constantly being offered a higher salary from the Columbia system. But she elected, so she elected to stay at Turner. But the folks feared that she could leave at any time. So they wanted to get Wanda at least one year under this left-handed, very wonderful teacher.

30 Stolz: Well you mentioned her love for the arts. Did she also have other influence or styles that you remember from her teaching?

35 Behymer: Oh, yes. She, we did things in that one-room school, we didn't realize then, but there was method to her madness of what she taught or how she taught. An example would be, we had a club, the American Junior Red Cross. And of course it was co-sponsored by the Red Cross. What did we meet, every other week, or something like that? Twice a month, maybe?

Gebhardt: Yeah.

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Behymer: It was run by the kids. We had our officers. We had dues, ten cents a month, maybe, I don't know. But it was minimal. We had a project or two during the year. I know one, maybe this was through every year. We would fill up these boxes that were provided by the Red Cross, of pencils and papers and Crayolas and send them to less fortunate areas. I
45 don't know whether it was in this country, other countries. But then we'd have, as part of this club, we learned parliamentary procedure. We'd have some fun games, we'd have some

games as part of the meeting. But they were learning experiences. Maybe a spelling bee. Maybe a math bee, if there is such a thing as a math bee. We'd do that. But it was fun, but yet we were learning at the same time.

5 Gebhardt: And by having officers, people were learning leadership roles, how to take minutes if you're going to be secretary. And I remember, we always had, every Christmas, she would have a play that we'd have to memorize the leads. And we'd have songs. And she would totally rearrange the school for about a month. And we'd put up a partition to draw the curtains for the play, course she played the piano. So it was a, and then we were required to
10 learn a poem every year. I was never good at memorization, but that was part of it. We would have to read so many books a year, we won a certificate. They were certain categories. There was the fiction, the nonfiction, the biographies.

Behymer: And the science or math type.

15

Gebhardt: Yes.

Behymer: Which was the least popular.

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Stolz: I'm sure. (laughs)

Gebhardt: We had to read the fewest of those, fortunately.

Behymer: But with the kids, for the most part, got to choose the books. It was a big deal.
25 Every year there was a list of possible books provided by the Missouri State Teachers Association. It was, you know, two or three or four-page list of possible books. And she would send that around to all the kids. And we could mark which ones we wanted. And we had to mark some of each of these A, B and C, the three categories. To the extent possible then, she and the school board would order the books that were checked the most times by
30 the kids. And it was a big deal the day that those books showed up in the school. I read everything on our bookshelf that was there.

Stolz: Did you have a small library, then, inside the school?

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Gebhardt: Yes.

Behymer: Yes.

Gebhardt: Pretty good-sized library, really.

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Behymer: For a one-room school, I'd say it was sizable.

Stolz: And the interior of the school, was it one big room?

45

Gebhardt: One big room, yes.

Stolz: Okay.

[End Track Three. Begin Track Four.]

5 Behymer: --And of course we had the basement where the lunchroom was and where the coal, where the coal was stored and the furnace and some storage space.

10 Gebhardt: And there were separate cloak rooms, bathrooms, for the girls and boys. But it was basically just one big room, and all eight grades were in there. And when she was teaching the first or the second grade, the rest of the kids were very disciplined and knew what they were supposed to be doing. Sometimes the eighth graders might help the first graders if she was teaching something else. But she was a wonderful disciplinarian. Didn't realize it until after years, but she was a wonderful, wonderful teacher.

15 Stolz: What kind of discipline did you have, if any?

Gebhardt: Respect for her, I think, if there's such a thing as that kind of discipline. But she'd look at you cross-eyed and you wouldn't do it again.

20 Behymer: I guess the strongest thing, you might lose a recess, have to stay in during recess, which was a big deal. Kids would go out and play for 15 or 20 minutes. You might have to stay in from that. But I don't remember much else that happened. She may have sent some notes home with the parents. Wanda probably got a bunch of notes sent home. (laughter)

25 Gebhardt: I don't think so.

Stolz: So you mentioned recess. So you did have recess. And how many did you have a day?

Gebhardt: One in the morning, one in the afternoon.

30 Behymer: Yes.

35 Gebhardt: Then we had an hour at lunch. And we had a big enough area outside, because we had the regular playground, the slide, the swings, the teeter totters. And then also a big enough area, there was a softball diamond. And there would be times that she would let the kids do it themselves, all the squabbles. Once in a while she would go out during the lunch hour and she would be the umpire. She'd call the balls and strikes.

40 Behymer: The big kids had their ball diamond, which was really a regulation size ball diamond. And then the littler kids, they had a little ball diamond themselves. And if the weather was not right, or particularly if it was cold, it wasn't conducive to playing softball, we'd play other games. We'd play circle. Oh, there was some, I can't remember all them now. But the kids would decide what they were going to do. Dodge ball.

45 Gebhardt: Tag.

Behymer: Yeah.

Stolz: And so you all played together, all the ages played together at recess?

5 Behymer: Typically it might be two groups, the younger and older. But not always. We had an old makeshift basketball goal. Very, very makeshift.

10 Gebhardt: There's nothing to say okay, four through eight, you have to play over here. There was no division like that. So if an eighth grader wanted to play on the swings, fine. There was no problem.

Stolz: And did you play outside year-round?

15 Gebhardt: If we could.

Behymer: We were encouraged to.

Gebhardt: Yes.

20 Behymer: Yes. Get out in that fresh air. Because 30, 35 sweating kids with, you got sometimes, I guess, kind of rank in there. So get out and clear out. (laughs)

25 Stolz: And what was the school day? Did you go in at eight o'clock and finish up around three?

Gebhardt: I don't think we started till nine? Got out at four?

Behymer: I think, that sounds about right. Nine to four. That sounds about right.

30 Gebhardt: And the school year, of course, never started until after Labor Day.

Behymer: And we were out for April 15th.

35 Gebhardt: We were eight-months schools for a while. And then what? I don't think you graduated, it went to nine months.

Behymer: I think I was out of there before it went to nine months.

40 Gebhardt: Were you?

Stolz: So April 15th was the last day?

Behymer: Yes. Roughly.

45 Stolz: And how did you two get to school every day? Did you walk? Ride bicycles?

Gebhardt: We were just a shade over a mile from school so there were oh, six or eight of us that would typically end up walking together. Some of the boys had bicycles they would ride. We had a pony that we got to ride once in a great while. I mean, that was special, because she had to be tied up all day. Once in a great while, I might ride with Mother on the tractor, but that was unusual. Usually it was walking.

Behymer: Yes.

Gebhardt: Regardless of the weather.

Behymer: And I never walked through a three-foot snow drift to get to school. (laughter)

Gebhardt: But we did walk a mile to school.

Behymer: Yes, we did. A little over a mile.

Stolz: And then you mentioned your mother would drive in on the tractor at lunchtime to cook.

Gebhardt: Yes. Yes.

Stolz: And how was that, having your mother there in the school often?

Gebhardt: She was in the basement, so I don't remember any problem.

Stolz: And was it fun to have your mom there when you went to school?

Behymer: Kind of a neutral.

Gebhardt: Yeah.

Behymer: That I remember. I guess maybe the other kids didn't complain about the food as much when I was around. They might have otherwise. I don't know.

Stolz: And what were the lunches like? Did everybody bring food? Or was the school provided by the school district and your mother cooked it?

Gebhardt: The food was provided by the school district. And I'm sure, was it once a month they had PTA meetings?

Behymer: Yes.

Gebhardt: And the parents would pay X dollars for the month, if they could. So we didn't have to take money to school to pay for our lunches. But it was cooked, it was a hot lunch we had every day.

[End Track Four. Begin Track Five.]

Behymer: Now in the first years of that hot lunch program, and I don't know how long this lasted, but every summer, sometime in late summer, maybe, the women would gather down
5 there and can, in half gallon jars, tomatoes, green beans. And that was part of the food that was used during the school year. And then the hated cod liver oil pill. All of us had to take one of those every day. (laughter)

10 Gebhardt: You couldn't eat until you'd had your pill.

Stolz: Really.

15 Gebhardt: And there was one young man, he was, I think, a year ahead of me, could not swallow. And he would literally sit at his table all during the lunch hour because he could not swallow that pill. The rest of us did.

Behymer: And you taste that sucker the rest of the day.

20 Stolz: And so this was all the way through school they made you do the cod liver pill.

Gebhardt: Yeah.

25 Behymer: Yeah. It was because of the vitamin aspect of it. What was it rich in? Vitamin D or something. Yeah. There was a reason for it, I'm sure.

Stolz: Right. Right.

30 Gebhardt: But it was provided, it was some of this stuff that was provided by the government.

Stolz: Expected for everybody to take. So you both went to the same school till graduation.

Behymer: Yes.

35 Stolz: And upon graduation from eighth grade, what happened from there? Did you go on to high school? You mentioned New Haven.

Gebhardt: We both went to Jefferson Junior High School.

40 Behymer: It was the only junior high school at that time.

Stolz: Okay.

45 Gebhardt: And then Hickman. Which again was the only high school.

Stolz: And so did they bus you in? Did you take a bus?

Gebhardt: Yes.

5 Behymer: I didn't. I was on my own to get to high school. Which meant I rode in with my dad to his office, which was at Tenth and Walnut.

Stolz: Okay.

10 Behymer: And then I'd walk from there to school. That was just a regular routine. Now once I got my driver's license, quite often I would let him off, my dad off. And then I would drive to school. I'd park at school. Unless he had meetings out that he had to drive. And sometimes, if he was out of town at meetings, I'd ride with a neighbor. Kind of the same process. I'd get off downtown somewhere, and then walk to Hickman. Which wasn't that bad. I didn't know any different. That was just part of it.

15 Stolz: Yeah. And then so Wanda, then, you took the bus.

20 Gebhardt: I took the bus. And my folks were very strict in the fact that the schools apparently would get money from the state or somewhere for every student who rode this bus. So to get money for the district, they insisted I ride the bus, much to my chagrin. (Stolz laughs) But if I had to be in early or had to stay late for whatever meeting of some kind, once in a while I would ride with my dad. But again, I'd walk from Hickman downtown to meet him. And vice versa.

25 Stolz: And since you went to city schools later on, do you feel the one-room schoolhouse education was equal or better than going to a larger more city type schools? Did you feel you were better prepared?

30 Behymer: It depended on which schools. What rural schools you went to? We were very fortunate, again, going back, because Turner was on the cutting edge as far as rural schools. And we got a lot of teaching and learning that some of these others didn't get. It was difficult going from the eighth grade in some one-room school to Jefferson Junior. And you know, some of the guys, mainly the guys I knew, they had a hard time. I didn't particularly have a hard time. We were in the quintile system at the time at Jeff Junior. You took some tests
35 ahead of time and you were assigned a level according to what your test score indicated. So I was fortunate that I was generally in the first quintile. And the students that were in the class with me were among the brighter students. Now that wasn't clear across the board. Because I was not particularly good in math. But by and large, some of the teachers at Jeff Junior in particular, they should have been run out of there 20 years before. Lucy Douglas was a far
40 superior teacher. A couple of the teachers I had at Jeff Junior, they were worthless. And this is on tape. They were worthless. (laughter)

45 Gebhardt: We won't name names. (laughter) I didn't find it difficult transition. Of course you were eight years in one room. And then ninth grade, one year in a large city school and then go three years to Hickman. But I didn't find it difficult. I didn't like having—

[End Track Five. Begin Track Six.]

5 Gebhardt: --get on that bus to ride home. That was kind of a social stigma. But the actual educational process and being up to speed with the rest of the kids. Like Wayne, I found myself in classes with the kids who were in the valedictorian, salutatorian, National Honor Society group.

Stolz: So your peers were equal as far as education.

10 Gebhardt: Yes.

Stolz: And I know, Wayne, you had mentioned before we started the recording that the one-room, for a while they were flip flopping the school years.

15 Behymer: Yes. Yes. Well, that meant in my case, I went from the fourth grade to the sixth grade, to the fifth grade, to the eighth grade and seventh grade because they would teach fifth and sixth grade the same year, and seventh and eighth grade the same year. So the classes before and after me, they went straight on through, as did Wanda. But I was caught in that group that every other year. Except for arithmetic. We called it arithmetic back then. You
20 went straight through on arithmetic, which was good. I did fine on all the subjects, except I suffered in English. Because I had my eighth grade English. Then I went back into seventh grade English. Then by the time I got to Jeff Junior, I had forgotten a lot of the stuff. The parts of speech, diagramming a sentence, such as that. That I was hurting there. Now I was a good speller. I had good grammar because of the folks, my folks, our folks, used good
25 grammar. They were intelligent people. They had high school educations. They could have gone on to college. That was during the Depression when they kind of came of age. And they didn't go to college. But they were smart. Education was valued. So we had that advantage going for us, that the folks valued education. There was no "ain't," you just never heard the word "ain't" around the house. Our dad didn't swear. Either out in the barn or in the house or
30 among his friends. That was just not done.

Gebhardt: And I don't think there's ever any doubt but what we would both go to college. It was just, "You will go to college."

35 Behymer: It was assumed.

Gebhardt: And I don't think that was the case in a lot of homes.

40 Stolz: Yeah. That's pretty remarkable for that time period, too, to be expected to go. And do you think, when you got to college, do you think the one-room schoolhouse influence carried over?

45 Gebhardt: Anything that good came out of it would have carried over. I don't know that there was anything negative that, when I got to college, that oh, if I had only had, that just didn't enter the equation.

Behymer: Yeah, I feel the same way. I mentioned earlier about starting to learn some parliamentary procedure. Well, that carried on to high school when I was in FFA. And that was the biggest thing I got out of FFA was the leadership parts of that. And again, conducting a meeting, being in meetings. So I guess that started in elementary school. Of course I also, in 4H, we were both in 4H, you got leadership training there. So I guess one kind of fed off the other. So. I never really thought about it, but I certainly didn't cry because I had been abused by not going to a larger school.

10 Gebhardt: I've never enjoyed public speaking. I can do it. And again, I think it goes back to the elementary school. Because one of the things we did, we had the option, we read a book, we could make a written book report or we could get up in front of the students and give an oral book report. And then also, again, the 4H club, one of the things you could do would be to give—

15 Behymer: Demonstrations.

Gebhardt: --demonstrations for how to thread a needle or how to groom a cow. So again, this public speaking started way back and just carried forward throughout our lives.

20 Stolz: So you did it without even knowing about it after a while.

Gebhardt: Yes.

Behymer: That's right.

25 Stolz: That's pretty remarkable, too. Because I know growing up, that was always one of my fears, too, was public speaking. I think a lot of people—

30 Behymer: Oh, mine, too. I was, but I don't know how bad, how much worse (laughter) had I not done a little of it.

Stolz: Probably the last question, what influence did attending the one-room schoolhouse have on your life overall?

35 Gebhardt: I can't think of anything negative.

Behymer: Maybe a work ethic?

[End Track Six. Begin Track Seven.]

40 Behymer: --because learning to work by yourself. Because we had to work by ourselves on our assignments while the teacher was working with the other grades. And some of the stuff, like going back to skipping one grade back and forth, and in the one-room school, you would hear the same lesson maybe four times. Starting, and I was interested in history, social
45 studies. So even in the fourth grade, if my assignment was done, I'd be listening to the upper

grades. So I had already had a smattering of what they were learning by the time I got into the upper grades. You know, repetition, once in a while it rubs off.

5 Stolz: (laughs) Yes. All right, before we close, is there anything that either one of you would like to add? Memories, thoughts?

Gebhardt: In some respects, I think it's too bad that we've gone away from the one-room rural school.

10 Behymer: You did good. (laughter)

Gebhardt: I don't think everybody can say that, because their experiences they had. For example, one of the schools in our district, they had a new teacher every year. Couldn't pay worth anything. So once she got experience, she moved on. So if you don't have continuity of a good teacher, it's going to affect you for the rest of your life.

15 Stolz: Right. Right.

Gebhardt: So in my opinion, that was a good experience.

20 Stolz: And I've heard that from several other people today as well.

Behymer: And I'll just add this. Our dad was very instrumental in getting the New Haven district, the organization, the reorganization done, and the building built. There were seven bond issues. Six were defeated. The district was reorganized, the seven schools. But then they couldn't pass a bond issue to get the money to build a new building. There was an element in the new district was very anti-education. You just have to say that. And they were very anti paying any more taxes than they had to. Well, they weren't paying hardly any taxes, because it was a one-room school. So the school district, the new school district, had bought land for the new school, roughly in the center of the district, the new district. Well, one of the excuses of these antis was they didn't like the location. So there was a six-person committee formed, ad hoc committee, if you will. Three from the opposition side, three from the proponents of the issue. But the people that were appointed were reasonable people. And so they were reasonable people in that they were willing to compromise. And the compromise was made. That they moved the location, the proposed location, from this one spot that had been purchased to where the site of New Haven school is today. Which was not in the center of the district. But the people who wanted the education felt it was far more important to have a building, have a school, than where it was located. And it turned out okay. But the bond issue did pass finally.

40 Gebhardt: But our parents were very, very supportive of, not only Mrs. Douglas, but as Wayne said, education as a whole. So they were always at the PTA meetings. You know, whatever was needed, they were there to support it.

45 Stolz: That's nice to hear, too, the support from the family. I think that's important. If there's nothing else, I'll go ahead—

Behymer: Well, there probably is. (laughter) But—

Stolz: Well thank you both so much.

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Behymer: Certainly.

Stolz: It's fun to have a pair of siblings talk about the experiences together. I think it's rare. The fact that you both went to the same school and the same teacher.

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Behymer: As we visit yesterday, Wanda and her husband got in yesterday, as we were visiting about the fact I was going to attend this oral history interview, I asked Wanda if she wanted to come along. Sure. And so we started sharing some stories ourselves. I didn't know about this turkey, burnt turkey. She didn't know why she had started to school so early, because she was a left-hander. We learned some things from each other that we didn't know.

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Stolz: Yeah, it's fascinating and fun. Well, thank you both so much.

Behymer: Certainly.

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Gebhardt: Thank you.

[End Session.]

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