

An Interview with

# **Olive Hampton**

at Greene County Extension Center in  
Springfield, Missouri

**22 March 2012**

interviewed by Jeff Corrigan



## **Oral History Program**

The State Historical Society of Missouri

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One-room Schoolhouse

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## PREFACE

Olive Hampton was born in 1925, north of Hartville, Missouri. She attended Little Creek School, a one-room schoolhouse for first through eighth grade, and went on to teach in Loring and Purdy for several years before moving on to teach sixth grade at Mark Twain School in Springfield, Missouri. Hampton provides a physical description of her childhood school as well as activities they participated in for entertainment including spelling bees, ciphering matches, and pie suppers. Hampton graduated from high school at the age of sixteen, the same year she got her first job as a teacher in her own one-room schoolhouse. That first year was a learning experience for her, and she feels she improved greatly in her next year of teaching. Hampton attended the State Teaching College, now Missouri State University, when her students were out of school. Hampton felt that she gained an excellent education and shares many interesting pieces of information about the experiences both as a student and as a teacher at a one-room schoolhouse.

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: Olive Hampton  
Interviewer: Jeff Corrigan  
Date: March 22, 2012  
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

5

**[Begin Interview.]**

**[Begin Track One.]**

10

Hampton: I'm ready.

Corrigan: Okay, good. So this is Jeff Corrigan, oral historian for the State Historical Society of Missouri. I'm here today, March 22, 2012, in Springfield, Missouri, at the Greene County Extension Center, at the botanical gardens, to interview Olive Hampton about her experience attending and teaching at a one-room schoolhouse. Also in the room is Dr. Virginia Lass, one of the society's trustees, and a history professor, retired history professor, from Missouri Southern, and Olive's husband Vernon. Is that correct?

20

Hampton: That's correct.

Corrigan: Vernon. Olive, can you tell me when and where you were born?

Hampton: I was born September the first, 1925. In their home, north of Hartville, Missouri, in Wright County.

25

Corrigan: So Hartville, Missouri, in Wright County.

Hampton: Right.

30

Corrigan: Did you have any siblings?

Hampton: Well, Harold was already, they already had Harold, the one I just told you about. And then I had two other brothers, younger.

35

Corrigan: So Harold was your older brother.

Hampton: Yes.

40

Corrigan: Then it was, were you second in line?

Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. And then what was your other two brothers' names?

45

Hampton: Johnny and Carl.

Corrigan: Johnny and Carl. Okay. And what did your parents do for a living?

5 Hampton: My dad was, he managed the Missouri Farmers' Exchange Store. It was a feed store and a grocery store.

Corrigan: And where was that located at?

10 Hampton: Well, it was on Highway 5 about seven miles north of Hartville.

Corrigan: And did your mom stay at home?

Hampton: Yes.

15 Corrigan: Okay. Did you ever have to work, did you ever work at the store?

Hampton: No.

20 Corrigan: Okay. Now when and where did you start school?

Hampton: I started to school at Little Creek School.

Corrigan: Can you say it again?

25 Hampton: Little Creek School.

Corrigan: Little Creek School.

30 Hampton: In 1930. August, 1930.

Corrigan: And did you always call it Little Creek? Was it—

Hampton: Yes.

35 Corrigan: Did your brothers also go there?

Hampton: Yes.

40 Corrigan: Okay. Could you describe the school for me?

Hampton: Yes. I was going to tell you, I was only four years old the day I started school.

Corrigan: You were?

45 Hampton: Because that's going to come out later in the story.

Corrigan: Okay.

Hampton: Because I had had all the diseases, and I wanted to go. So my folks let me go.

5 Corrigan: Because typically they didn't have kindergarten or anything. You had to wait till first grade.

Hampton: Right. Exactly.

10 Corrigan: So you were allowed to go before then.

Hampton: Yes.

15 Corrigan: Okay. Yeah, if you want to tell me, describe the inside of the school, the outside of the school. As much as you remember about the actual physical building. Okay.

20 Hampton: This was, it was the rural one-room school with all eight elementary grades. And there was usually around 40 students ranging from ages five—I was four, then I turned five September first—to 18 years of age that's in school each year. You want just a description of the school.

Corrigan: Yeah. Was it red? Was it white? Was it—

25 Hampton: Okay. It was a white building. And both inside, the side walls were all, there were windows and then in between each window was blackboards. Of course we used the boards to work on. The porch in front and the school bell in the belfry. And the back of the room was bookcases. And we had our heating stove. It was a, those that had a box around—  
[unclear]—what do you call those box stove with a jacket around them? I don't know what, I've forgotten what they were called. But that's what we heated with.

30

Corrigan: Was it wood or coal?

Hampton: Wood. It was a wood stove.

35 Corrigan: Wood stove.

40 Hampton: And we had, we did not have electricity. We had no electricity. No running water. The well was out in front of the building. And we had, the teacher, probably some of the older kids probably helped draw water out of the well. And put it in a water bucket. We all drank out of the same dipper. For a while.

Corrigan: I was curious about that, if you—

45 Hampton: And then the county superintendent, the county super—am I going too far now?

Corrigan: No, no, no, no. You're, no, go. Go ahead.

Hampton: The county superintendent took over. It was—

**[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]**

5

Hampton: —my great-aunt who became the county superintendent. And she—

Corrigan: What was her name?

10

Hampton: Essie Findley. She had, she got us cleaned up. First thing she had them put in a pump well so it pumped it out. And then in a bucket. Then we all had to bring our own dippers at that point. And then I told you about the diseases that Harold had when he started. So about two or three years later, after I started, she got the county nurse came out and vaccinated all of us for those childhood diseases.

15

Corrigan: Do you want to mention again while we're on the recorder, what was the, what was some of the diseases your brother had and then given to you?

20

Hampton: He had whooping cough, measles and chicken pox. That was it. It was the three diseases at that time. And of course the reason for the vaccinations was typhoid. You know, the bad water was, could have been typhoid. In fact, we had a little girl in the school who did die. She didn't have typhoid. I think it was scarlet fever, maybe, is what it was called. And they could not put her body in the church to have the service. It had to be out, because people were afraid of it because it was so contagious. Then the other, going ahead with the classroom, I remember the big pictures of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln hanging on the walls. On the side of the walls. And the front of the room was a blackboard where the teacher put her assignments. Every morning we had our assignments on the board. And the flag. We said the pledge to the flag every morning. And we sang a song. We always had a song every morning. Said the pledge.

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30

Corrigan: So what kind of songs would you sing?

35

Hampton: Well I know, one teacher, she was a gospel, so we had gospel song. See, back then we didn't have movies to go to. This was the community building. (laughs) So it was our entertainment.

Corrigan: Now you said you had the chalkboards in between the windows on the walls.

40

Hampton: Right.

Corrigan: So you didn't have the individual slates at your desk then, correct?

Hampton: Nope. Never had any slate on my desk.

45

Corrigan: Okay.

Hampton: We may have had, but that I don't remember.

Corrigan: Okay. Do you remember approximately how big the building was?

5 Hampton: Well at the time it was huge. But I was little. (laughs) I'm sure if I could see it  
now it wouldn't be so big. But see, the thing about, in time, they consolidated all the rural  
schools into town. And so somebody in the community was not happy with that. So they  
burned, they set fire and burned our building down. So all of that burned up. Not only our  
10 school, but they also burned another building down. Because, but they always suspicioned  
who did it, but they didn't have any proof. So they couldn't ever find out who did that.

Corrigan: Do you remember when that was burned down? Roughly?

15 Hampton: Well it was, it was not too long after, they consolidated in about '52. And that's  
about the time when it would have burned down, '52 to '53, in that vicinity. I don't know the  
exact year.

Corrigan: No, that's okay. One of the things you kind of mentioned, and I was going to ask  
that, was you kind of mentioned the school was also like a community center.  
20

Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: Could you describe how, what other activities were held there?

25 Hampton: We had, we always had pie suppers, money raisers. And we had, and that was a  
big community thing.

Corrigan: And could you describe how they were run?

30 Hampton: Yes I can. They had, all the ladies in the area brought in pies. Home baked pies.  
And they all were displayed on the front. And then the men and boys bid on the pies. They  
were not supposed to know whose pies they were. But once in a while, you know, I'm sure  
that happened a lot, they know somebody had it. Everybody wanted that pie. So that one  
35 made a good prize. (laughs) That one, whoever bid the highest got the pie. And then the boys  
or men had to eat with the girl or lady whose pie they had.

Corrigan: But you're saying that ahead of time, most people didn't know, you weren't  
supposed to know whose pie it was.

40 Hampton: Right. Exactly.

Corrigan: Okay. That's the first time I had heard—

**[End Track Two. Begin Track Three]**

45

Corrigan: —that. Okay. What time of year was this held? Was it always the same time each year? Was it in the fall?

5 Hampton: Fall. That would have been. Because I remember they had cherry pies. And I mean, they had good, there were good pie bakers in the community.

Corrigan: Now was the school used for anything else? Did you have like a Christmas program there?

10 Hampton: Yes. We always had a Christmas program. And there again, it was for the community. Anybody who wanted to come and see the program came. And then we always had a program the last day of school. And that was a big picnic day. All the parents came in and brought basket lunches. And we had, we had a big picnic. (laughs)

15 Corrigan: Now would you do, was it kind of set up almost like today we think of maybe like a little spring fling? Or like did you have games and activities to play at the picnic?

20 Hampton: Well, we had games we played all, I've got them in my story. We had games all year. Oh, you mean like contest games?

Corrigan: Yeah, at the picnic. Yeah. I'll ask you about recess later. But I wondered about the—was this a day-long event on the weekend?

25 Hampton: Yes, it was. It was on, well, it was on the last day of school. It would have been a Friday.

Corrigan: Okay. Did the school get used for anything else? I mean, was that the kind of place where if there was a local meeting or anything, was it held there?

30 Hampton: Now see, I can't say yes or no to that. Because I have a feeling it was. But of course we had a church, a Little Creek Church, also, and it would have been used for a lot of that. It was a big, nice, it was a nice place for somebody to be raised in. I'll tell you that much.

35 Corrigan: Okay.

40 Hampton: You're talking about games. We had Annie Over, you know, where you have two teams, on each side of the schoolhouse. And throw the ball over the schoolhouse. And you know, the point, if you caught the ball, somebody caught the ball, then you got, the team get to run around to the other side. And they tag anybody they could and then they had to stay on that team, you know. So. (laughs)

Corrigan: So that was one of your recess activities.

45 Hampton: Right. Exactly.

Corrigan: Do you remember, did you have recess, was it both morning, noon and afternoon?

Hampton: Yes. We had, because then we had the bathrooms, we had outdoor toilets. So that's when we went to the toilets.

5

Corrigan: Did they have an outhouse for both the boys and the girls?

Hampton: Yes. We had a separate outhouse. Yeah.

10 Corrigan: And were those back behind the school?

Hampton: Yes.

15 Corrigan: Was there, outside of the school, was there any type of playground equipment, or—

Hampton: Well, we had a ball diamond. And I, and I, we had swings. We had, that's about the only equipment I remember. I don't think we had slides. We had swings.

20 Corrigan: So you did have a ball diamond and swings.

Hampton: Yes, we had a ball diamond.

25 Corrigan: Do you remember roughly how long recess was?

Hampton: I would say probably, now this was a guess. I'm guessing 20 minutes, probably. But then we had a good hour at noon to play.

30 Corrigan: Okay. So what other games besides Annie Over did you play?

35 Hampton: Well we had, let me read off my list here, I've got it written down. We played dodge ball. We played marble games. We ran races. We played horseshoes. We played jump the rope and hopscotch. And then he reminded me this morning, pick-up sticks. Now when it was time for the games to end, this, I thought was, I think this is pretty interesting, the teacher would ring the bell. That's when the school bell would ring. And we'd know it was time to come in and get to work.

Corrigan: Now what did you do when there was bad weather outside?

40 Hampton: I remember one game we played where the ball was thrown over our heads. And we had, we could play games on the board. We had math games. We used to have ciphering matches at our school and spelling bees. That was part of our entertainment. We'd invite other schools to come to our school and we'd have a spelling bee in competition with the other class. And ciphering matches, which was math, of course.

45

Corrigan: Okay. But you said there was a game, though, that you played inside that you would throw a ball over somebody's heads.

Hampton: Yes. Keep away.

5

Corrigan: Could you tell me about—keep away.

Hampton: I guess that was keep away.

10

Corrigan: Okay. Now was the teacher always supervising you outside? Or were you guys just on your own?

Hampton: No, she wouldn't, the teachers couldn't have been everywhere on that playground. I'm sure the teacher was more at the front—

15

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

Hampton: —of the building, where you could see it all. Because with that many people, there's going to be a lot of activity going on everywhere.

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Corrigan: And you said "that many people." Remind me again, how many students were in the school? And how many were in your class?

Hampton: I think in my, in the first, you can see, those pictures, there's a bunch of little ones down there. But we had pretty good-sized classes, you know. And probably six to eight except when you got up to those older classes, some of those kids who were taking the eighth grade more than, their first or second year in the eighth grade, the eighth grade probably was a bigger class. Because you could see, there was kids were good-sized kids in that picture.

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Corrigan: Did the population fluctuate a lot in the school? Or did it stay pretty consistent?

Hampton: It was pretty consistent. I have to tell you how we got to school. Or our lunches. That's another thing, our lunches. We carried our lunch sack. And usually was a biscuit with a fried egg. Because we didn't go to the store and buy a loaf of bread. Because there wasn't any there to be had. (laughs) And I guess we probably had fruit, because we always had orchards. And probably, probably cookies. And we had to walk a long ways to get to the school. I walked about two miles.

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40

Corrigan: I was going to say how far, yeah, so you said it was about two miles from your farm.

Hampton: Right.

Corrigan: Did you walk with your older brother, then?

45

Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: Did your mother ever walk you to school?

Hampton: I don't think so.

5

Corrigan: Okay.

Hampton: And there was a few—there was another family that lived, that would join us on the way home sometimes. But in the snow then, when the snow was on, they wrapped our, back then, we didn't wear jeans. We didn't wear long pants to school. (laughs) We'd wear 10 underwear, long underwear. And then when it snowed, they'd wrap gunnysack material around our legs, you know, and tie it with string to keep our legs from being, getting in the snow too much. And the girls, see, when we had long underwear on, you'd pull your hose up over that. The girls would be embarrassed. And so we'd get to school and we'd roll our 15 underwear up. We had that big wad around our, and it probably looked worse than it would have if we'd left it down. (laughter) But we hid the underwear, the long underwear.

Corrigan: Well we can hit a few different things. One thing I wanted to ask you about was, do you remember your teachers? Did you have one teacher throughout or did it change a lot? 20

Hampton: Oh, no. My first grade teacher was Marie Mingus.

Corrigan: Marie Mingus.

25 Hampton: And then my second and third grade teacher was Virgil Rippee. And my fourth grade teacher was Ethel Lattimer. My fifth and sixth grade teacher was Alice Kilmer. And my seventh and eighth grade teacher was Janie Haig.

Corrigan: What was Virgil's last name again? 30

Hampton: Rippee

Corrigan: Rippee. Okay. Now out of all of those teachers – and you had quite a few – is there anything that sticks out in your mind? Did you think one of those was just the best 35 teacher that you thought you learned the most? Or that you enjoyed the most?

Hampton: Well I think, I had warm feelings about Virgil Rippy, the second and third grade teacher. And then Alice Kilmer, our fifth and sixth grade teacher, she's the one that would teach us, let us sing gospel songs. And that's where I learned to sing harmony. Alto. Because 40 she taught, that's what she taught us.

Corrigan: So was she the only one that had, so did she incorporate music into the classroom, then?

45 Hampton: Well we all, we all just, we always sang something in the morning. We did that all the time. And that's, that was it.

Corrigan: Was that just with her? Or with all the teachers you sang?

5 Hampton: We all had, we all, we all did, we all said the pledge and sang something. Probably “America.” I bet we did some patriotic song, probably.

Corrigan: And did you say, did you put the flag up every day outside, too?

10 Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: Was that always, did that rotate who did that? Did different students do that each day?

15 Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. One question I have is did you learn a lot from listening to the other kids—

20 Hampton: I’m sure I did. That was something I was going to tell you. At the end of my first grade year, I was just five years old, as you know, I started at four. And the teacher asked my parents if they wanted me—

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

25 Hampton: —to be promoted. She told them that I knew as much as the rest of them did. But I wasn’t old enough. But they chose to let me go on. So I graduated from high school at 16. That’s why when I started teaching, I was 17 years old.

30 Corrigan: Okay. Were you lined up in the classroom? Was it one where the young kids were up front? And then the older kids were back?

Hampton: Yes, we did.

Corrigan: Did you have the individual seats? Or did you have kind of those bench seats?

35 Hampton: No, we had the, we had the benches that had two, two. And then those fold, those desks that—

Corrigan: The table the top kind of folded up?

40 Hampton: Right.

45 Corrigan: Okay. Let’s see. You told us how you got to school each day and how far it was. Could you tell me specifically a little bit more where the school was located? Since it no longer exists. Do you know what road it was on? Or—

Hampton: Well it was pretty, it wasn't too far off of Highway 5. We walked from where we lived through the woods. We had to go by the Little Creek Church. Went through the woods. And we were, we were within, oh, you could see the store. You could see my dad's store. That's where my dad's store was is right on, a little bit farther down was Highway 5. And that's where the MFA exchange was. So we were close to Highway 5.

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. Now going back to the school on the inside, did you have chores to perform as a kid? Did you have to carry in the water, wood? Clean?

Hampton: Oh, some, well the teachers, you know, were their own janitors. So somebody had to carry in the wood and clean out the ashes and carry in the water. So I don't remember, I'm sure I did my part. But I don't remember. Because there was the, for a while there had been a lot of older kids to do it. And I'm sure we had to wash the blackboards. Because they were used and to have them cleaned. And I remember dusting erasers, you know. I remember doing that.

Corrigan: Where you went outside and—

Hampton: Went outside and hit them on the wall. Dusted the chalk dust out of them.

Corrigan: Was that something that was done every day? Or did you do it every week?

Hampton: Probably every week.

Corrigan: Every week.

Hampton: And see, the stove we had, I kept it, is that a pot-bellied stove? Is that what they're called?

Corrigan: Yeah, that sounds familiar.

Vernon Hampton: That's what they are—

Hampton: And the ashes, the ashtrays were under it. And when it was really cold and we'd come in from outside and everybody would have cold feet, the teacher would let us to sit around the stove once in a while. And I can remember some of the boys would be a little roughshod. And I can remember them spilling some of those coals out of the pan. And somebody had to clean it up. (laughs)

Corrigan: Now you said, you talked about your lunch. You said lunch was an hour, though?

Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: Did everybody always stay at the school? Or did some kids live close enough—

Hampton: They all stayed at the school.

Corrigan: They all stayed at the school. Now what about in winter? I've heard sometimes the teacher maybe would put on a pot of soup or something? Did that ever happen?

5 Hampton: No, we never had anything like that at that time.

Corrigan: I was wondering one other thing about the inside of the school. Did you have a piano or anything?

10 Hampton: Yeah. Well they had, I think it was an organ.

Corrigan: Okay.

Hampton: There was an organ.

15

Corrigan: Was it only one room? Or was there a cloak room or anything?

Hampton: It was one room. And both corners, as you came in the front, there was two front doors. And the boys' cloaks—coats were here and the girls' over here. And our lunchboxes. There were shelves for lunchboxes.

20

Corrigan: Did you have any area in the school that had like library books or anything?

Hampton: Yes. Back in the back. One, all across the back were no windows in the back. And one side was where the stove was. And then the bookcases on all across there.

25

Corrigan: Did you have a lot of books?

Hampton: I remember it seemed like there were a lot. But then again, I was not very old. So it could have, but I'm sure we had plenty.

30

Corrigan: Were you ever allowed to check them out and take them home?

Hampton: I'm sure we did. I don't remember that for sure. But I imagine we got to take a reading, I'm sure we had to have some study at times.

35

Corrigan: Okay. And did you go to that school all the way through the eighth grade?

Hampton: I did.

40

Corrigan: You did. And you graduated from there?

Hampton: Yes.

45 Corrigan: Where did you go after that? Where did you go to high school?

Hampton: I went to Hartville, Missouri. My plans were, at that time, up until 1938, there had not been school buses to take kids to town. To school. To high school. So a lot of those kids in my room were a bit older kid. Because they were, that was their second or third year in the eighth grade. So my plans were, when I graduated in the spring, were to—

5

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

Hampton: —take another year in the eighth grade. But during the summer, they got school buses. So we got to go to school.

10

Corrigan: So then you were bused to Hartsville.

Hampton: Right.

15

Corrigan: Hartville or Hartsville?

Hampton: Hart. H-a-r-t-v-i- and we rode this bus. I mean, it would pick us up. And we rode several miles, you know, to pick up everybody that was riding the bus. Who rode.

20

Corrigan: Okay. By any chance, did you keep in contact with anybody that you ever went to school with?

Hampton: Well, we all went to high school. We all were, most everybody in my, I guess everybody in my class went to high school together. And then after that, we all had different occupations. I was going to school.

25

Corrigan: Now could you tell me, do you feel that you got a quality education?

Hampton: I felt, I think we had a good school. I think that's why the people resented it. Now the only thing that would have been lacking, we wouldn't have had as good a music program, because we didn't have bands. And we probably wouldn't have had, we wouldn't have had basketball, that stuff. But we had, it was a good, it was the best school in Wright County. I can say that. (laughter) It was good. It was a good school. And I had a good education there.

30

Corrigan: Why do you think that was? Do you think, were your parents and the community parents? Was education valued?

35

Hampton: Yes. I think, that's what made Little Creek—I think everybody wanted. And I'll go ahead with the story of the good school. A lot of us from our school turned out to be valedictorians, salutatorians in school. I was salutatorian. And Johnny was valedictorian. And Carl was salutatorian. And then I could name a lot of other kids who went on in other grade levels. So that tells you we had a good education compared to some of the other schools around. We had, it was a good one.

40

Corrigan: Okay. Good. So your parents and other parents, they all, the school board, they valued having a good teacher and a good education.

45

Hampton: Exactly. And see we, a lot of times during the year, too, you know, we didn't have, we'd just have 6 ½ months of school. Because they didn't have enough money to pay the teacher. So a lot of times, 6 ½ months, school was out. And it always started early. You know, we always started the first of August. Because the kids, the older kids, needed to get out in the spring to help put out crops, you know. So that's the way they did.

Corrigan: Now I was going to ask you, I'm going to ask you this question later. I was going to. Because you weren't just a student. You also were a teacher.

Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: Could you describe to me, could you tell me how that happened? How you said you graduated school at 16. Turned 17. But can you tell me how that happened? How you ended up becoming the teacher then?

Hampton: Well my, all of my ancestors were teachers or doctors. So it was in my blood, you know, to be a teacher. In fact, my dad taught a year or two before he did—and my aunt was Harold's first grade teacher in that picture there. And another aunt taught all of her life. And it was just kind of ingrained in me. So actually, the first year I taught, just kind of thrown at me. I just had the opportunity and I took it.

Corrigan: And when was that? Was that when you turned 17?

Hampton: I was 17. I had one year, I had one year when I was 16. But it was kind of, I don't remember much about that school. It was a learning experience for me. I was way too young to be thrown into that situation. I'm sure those kids didn't learn much that year. (laughs) But then the next year that I went to the other school, and I had a good experience. We had, I didn't say that for the teacher in the school I went to, but we had a course of study that we had to follow. See, eight grades, I mean, that could have been a problem, teach everybody all they needed. So we had a course of study for each grade. It told us what those kids needed to be taught. And if you didn't teach it, those kids that were graduating from the eighth grade would have been in trouble. Because they had to pass a test to get their diploma. So we had to teach it.

Corrigan: So what was the name of the school that you taught at?

Hampton: Loring. And it was on further, it was down closer to Grove Springs, Missouri.

**[End Track 6. Begin Track 7.]**

Hampton: And it was wartime. The reason I could teach at 16 and 17. Because we had just gone to war. World War Two. So they were short of teachers. So they could use anybody who wanted to do it could teach. And during the year there, the army wanted scrap metal. So the parents would bring in loads of old worn out cars and anything that was metal. And pile

in the front yard. And then the army would come by and pick up that scrap metal and take it to make, I guess, guns or whatever they used it for. (laughs)

5 Corrigan: Do you remember how much you were paid?

Hampton: I don't.

Corrigan: Okay.

10 Hampton: But it was money. (laughs)

Corrigan: And how long did you teach for, then?

15 Hampton: I taught two years there. And I walked to that, too. I walked about three miles every morning to get to that school. And walked home.

Corrigan: And was this from your parents' house still?

20 Hampton: Yes.

Corrigan: So it was three miles in the other direction.

Hampton: Right.

25 Corrigan: Okay. So not too far from where you went to school, just—

Hampton: Right. Just another direction.

30 Corrigan: Okay. Now do you have any stories that stick out in your mind about maybe something that happened at the school? Something funny? Something that really just sticks in your mind that you'd like to share?

Hampton: I can't think of anything like that right now.

35 Corrigan: Okay. Now I'll ask you, since you taught at a school and you went to a school, what kind of influence do you think attending a one-room school and teaching at a one-room school had on your life?

40 Hampton: I think, I think that it, by going to one myself before I started teaching, I think I learned that it was important to every grade level get what they needed. So I think that would have been the main thing. When I started teaching, I wanted to make sure that every kid at every grade level got what they needed. And I did my best to get it across. (laughs)

45 Corrigan: Now that experience with you taking over the classroom, did that give you confidence? Did it make you independent? I mean, how do you view that first job of yours? Do you—

5 Hampton: Well, I enjoyed it. And I feel like, at the time, I know that first year I told you about, I didn't do too well. But when I started this two years at Loring School, I felt like I knew what I was doing. And I think I did. And see, the other, I didn't tell you this, if, but in an order to get the next year contract, you had to go to STC. It was State Teachers' College then. I had to go in the summer to STC. Well see back then, STC had four terms. It had fall, spring—fall, winter, spring and summer. Nine-week terms. And so by starting school in August, I would get out in time to get two terms in at STC. Because—

10 Corrigan: So you would teach starting August first through winter.

Hampton: Yeah.

Corrigan: Or up to winter.

15

Hampton: About the first of March is when school would be out.

Corrigan: Okay. So then you took the spring semester and the summer semester.

20 Hampton: Right. At STC. And I had to walk about four miles to get to Highway 38 to catch the bus to ride to Springfield. I didn't have an automobile. And my folks didn't have an automobile.

25 Corrigan: Okay. So then, so you went to what is today here in Springfield, Missouri—Missouri State University.

Hampton: Yes. Right.

Corrigan: But back then it was called STC.

30

Hampton: Right.

Corrigan: Okay. And what kind of, were you taking classes, education classes, to help you become a better teacher? What kind of classes were you taking?

35

40 Hampton: The classes I took were not for elementary. My major was commerce subjects. Typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping. And that's the classes I took. But I got my hours in. So I took those classes. Because after I got through with the elementary school two years, then I started teaching commerce subjects. I went to Purdy, Missouri and taught four years at Purdy, Missouri.

Corrigan: Purdy, Missouri?

Hampton: Uh huh.

45

Corrigan: Okay. And you taught typing?

Hampton: I taught typing, shorthand and bookkeeping.

Corrigan: Okay.

5

Hampton: But I was getting my hours in for my contract at the rural school—

**[End Track 7. Begin Track 8.]**

10

Hampton: —where I was teaching.

Corrigan: And did you continue on with that later? Did you continue teaching? Or—

Hampton: Yes I did. I married him. (laughs) Then I—

15

Corrigan: And what year was that? What year did you guys get married?

Hampton: That was 1948.

20

Corrigan: 1948. Okay.

Vernon Hampton: Been a long time—

25

Hampton: So then I left Purdy, Missouri and came home. Back to, we lived close to where my folks lived, in that area down in Hartville. So times were hard. And it just, I had to work. So I just continued going to, by that time I almost had my degree in commerce. Not quite. And I had a minor in math. But at the time, at that time, those openings in commerce field were not there. You had to go way out another town. So then I got chances to teach in elementary school. And I started that. Then I had to take a few more classes at SMS in order to get a degree in elementary education. And then we moved to Springfield. And then I taught here in Springfield for 30 years.

30

Corrigan: Oh, you did. Where did you teach at?

35

Hampton: At Mark Twain School.

Corrigan: So you taught at Mark Twain School in Springfield here for 30 years.

Hampton: Yes.

40

Corrigan: And what did you teach?

45

Hampton: Sixth grade, basically. I had other grades to start with. But this principal, she said, “You belong with the sixth grade.” She said, “I wouldn’t put you down lower. I need you in the sixth grade.” Of course I had taught the high school kids. And I guess maybe without my realizing it, I guess you deal with them a little differently, the older kids. (laughs)

Corrigan: So you ended up, so teaching became, early on at 16. But it became the rest of your life you taught.

5 Hampton: Yes, yes.

Corrigan: Okay. So that school, that one-room schoolhouse did have a lasting effect on you.

10 Hampton: Yes, yes. And not only that, but my son and his wife are teachers here in Springfield. Ron was, Ron Hampton was the head of the Phelps gifted education program the last few years. But he was at other schools to start with. And then his wife, Janice, has taught here in Springfield. Then my daughter that lives in Texas now taught in Springfield.

Corrigan: And what's her name?

15

Hampton: Linda. Linda—

Corrigan: So you have Ron and Linda.

20 Hampton: And Ron's wife is Janice. Ron and Janice. And Linda. And then Helen got her education degree. And then, but then she's in insurance. She's working with insurance now.

Corrigan: So you have three children?

25

Hampton: I've got four. Larry. But he didn't go into education. He's a music man.

Corrigan: Okay. So you guys had four children. And quite a few with education degrees and in education.

30

Hampton: Right.

Corrigan: Okay.

35

Hampton: Then I have—this is going to be, is this okay to put something else in my story?

Corrigan: Yeah. Yes.

40

Hampton: We, all five of our grandchildren now, we have seen them all graduate from high school. And all of them graduate from college. And now we've got one that's in the Air Force who's been overseas four times. So we feel very fortunate to have—

Vernon Hampton: Two doctors, two doctors, our grand—

45

Corrigan: Your grandchildren. So you have five grandchildren.

Hampton: Five grandchildren.<sup>1</sup>

Corrigan: And two of them are doctors?

5 Hampton: Well, one is studying to be a doctor. Another is an anesthesiologist, which is a doctor.

Corrigan: Yes.

10 Hampton: And another one is in nurses training. And then the other daughter, granddaughter, got her degree in criminology last year. So she's in her master's program there now. And then the other son is an architect. He graduated from Drury in architect. He's working down at an architect company. So.

15 Corrigan: So when you said a while ago that education ran in your family and you meant beforehand, you also mean afterward.

Hampton: Exactly.

20 Corrigan: So you have a long-running tradition of education.

Hampton: Yes.

25 Corrigan: That's great. Is there anything else you, I saw you had some notes there. Is there anything else we didn't talk about, or any stories or activities that happened at the school? If you want to look over your notes quick. Because we have time to put it on here on the tape if you want. But I want to make—

Hampton: We could turn it off and then—you probably—

30

Corrigan: It's still on right now. But just if you, I want to make sure there's something we didn't cover if you want to. Take your time.

Hampton: See if there's any—I told you about carrying lunches to school.

35

Corrigan: Yes.

Hampton: And about the teacher wanting to know if I could be promoted. And talking about the water supply.

40

Corrigan: Mm hmm. Yeah, no, take your time to see, I want to make sure that we get everything that you want to cover on here, and everything that you wrote down.

**[End Track 8. Begin Track 9.]**

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<sup>1</sup> Olive Hampton's grandchildren's names are Court, Bailey, Michael, Staci, and Kaitlyn.

Hampton: We had board games to use inside.

Corrigan: Oh, okay.

5 Hampton: We had checkers, domino, tic-tac-toe. And then I told you about the keep away ball.

Corrigan: Yeah.

10 Hampton: I told you about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln's picture.

Corrigan: Uh huh.

15 Hampton: We didn't have electricity. Oh, that's something. We used coal oil and kerosene lamps. And filled the light bulbs with kerosene and the wick was in it. And it ended up above the oil so it could be lit. And we had globes for the lamps. We had kerosene lanterns. Of course it had, the school had windows, lots of windows on both sides of the building. So we had lots of daylight.

20 Corrigan: Was it one of those where the windows are always on the east and west side? Do you remember?

Hampton: No, they were all—yes, they were. They were.

25 Corrigan: I don't know why I know that. But I found out in a lot of these interviews that it seemed that the schools were always set up that they always faced north and south. And the windows faced east and west to let the sunlight in because they had no electricity. I just, she had mentioned that. That's the first time, though, that anybody's mentioned chalkboards any place other than the front.

30

Hampton: Oh, really?

Corrigan: Yeah. That's why I had asked you again about in between each window you said there was a chalkboard.

35

Hampton: Yeah.

Corrigan: Were they big windows?

40 Hampton: Yeah, they had to be pretty good-sized windows. I bet you. The whole, the whole side of the wall was windows and blackboard. Windows and blackboard.

Corrigan: Okay.

45 Hampton: The windows weren't as big as a chalkboard, I don't imagine. And see that, the thing about, my kids want me to write a book. And I may write a book using some of this

information. I'm kind of being pushed. (laughs) But when you get into it, it's hard to stop, you know.

5 Corrigan: No, no, no. And it's great that you wrote down the stuff, too. That way you had a reference to it and you can reference it for something else. And it's nice that you have the pictures, too, so you can look back at your class and see how many kids there are.

10 Hampton: Well I saw a picture in the Sunday paper of somebody's classroom. Somebody put it in the paper or something.

Corrigan: In that article?

Hampton: Yeah.

15 Corrigan: Yeah.

Hampton: So I brought my pictures.

20 Corrigan: Well, great. Well, if you don't want to add anything else, I'm going to go ahead and shut off the recorder.

Hampton: All right.

25 Corrigan: But thank you very much for sharing your story. I really appreciate it.

Hampton: I enjoyed it.

Corrigan: No, I hope you enjoyed it, too. Thank you.

30 **[End Track 9. End Interview.]**