

An Interview with
June Richter

at Greene County Extension Center in
Springfield, Missouri

22 March 2012

interviewed by Dr. Virginia Laas



Oral History Program
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Collection C4051

One-room Schoolhouse

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PREFACE

June Richter was born near Walnut Grove, Missouri, on November 15, 1921. At the age of 5, she began her formal education at a one-room schoolhouse called Oak Grove. After attending Oak Grove for a few years, she moved to a new school at Walnut Grove. Richter highlights her experiences in both schools, including notable teachers, family life, transportation to school, holiday programs, and interactions with classmates. She also discusses her later education at Walnut Grove High School and Southwest Missouri State College (now Missouri State University). After completing some coursework at Southwest Missouri State College, Richter taught at Oak Grove for one year before joining her husband at military bases on the West Coast during World War II.

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: June Richter
Interviewer: Virginia Laas
Date: March 22, 2012
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

5

[Begin Interview.]

[Begin Track One.]

10

Laas: This is Virginia Laas, a trustee for the State Historical Society of Missouri. And I'm here today, March 22, 2012, in Springfield, Missouri, at the Greene County Extension Center, to interview June Richter about her experience attending and teaching at a one-room school. So there's our introduction and we can start. Why don't we start by you telling me where you were born and when?

15

Richter: Okay. I was born near Walnut Grove, Missouri, November 15, 1921.

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Laas: And tell me a little bit about your family. Your siblings and your parents.

Richter: I had two sisters. And I was actually born at my grandparents'.

Laas: At their home?

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Richter: At my grandparents' home. And lived there until I was two years old. Then only moved just a little piece down the road. And I spent most of my childhood at my grandma's. Which I now own that. Well, my daughter now lives there, but where I was born.

30

Laas: Oh, my. Oh. Walnut Grove is beautiful. You had two sisters. Were you the oldest?

Richter: I was the oldest.

Laas: And then who, what were their names?

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Richter: Jean—

Laas: And she was—

40

Richter: And Shirley.

Laas: And Shirley. And what's the age difference?

Richter: I was two years older than Jean. Five years older than Shirley.

45

Laas: So the oldest sibling.

Richter: Mm-hm.

Laas: Okay. Where did you start school?

5

Richter: At Oak Grove. It's a little country school. Oak Grove.

Laas: How far was that from home?

10

Richter: Was about two miles. And of course we walked.

Laas: How old were you when you started?

Richter: Five.

15

Laas: Five?

Richter: Well, almost six, yeah.

20

Laas: Okay. Almost six.

Richter: Yeah. Started in September, usually. And I was six in November.

Laas: Okay. Okay. But you were still five when you started first grade.

25

Richter: Yes.

Laas: And it was a one-room schoolhouse.

30

Richter: One room. Yes, ma'am.

Laas: And maybe two miles from your home?

Richter: Approximately.

35

Laas: Yeah. That's a lot for a little five year-old legs to go.

Richter: Yes.

40

Laas: Did you walk all winter? Most of the time?

Richter: Yes. We walked in the winter. I'm sure if it was a blizzard or something, they would come and pick us up. But I do remember walking home in, I would call it a blizzard. And it was kind of stupid thing to do. Of course, I was a younger one. We took a different path than usual. Cut through a field. And it had drifted so. And with my short legs, it was

45

hard to get through there. And it took us forever to get to my aunt's house. We were about frozen when we got there.

5 Laas: Was this when you were in the first grade?

Richter: I wasn't very old. It was maybe second or somewhere along in there. But if they had come looking for us, we wouldn't have been in the right—we wouldn't have in the road. We cut through the field.

10 Laas: How many of you?

Richter: Well, there was about five of us. And the older girl, I'd say she was, probably would've been in the eighth grade, I don't know. But she's the one that, we followed her, of course.

15 Laas: Of course. (laughter) Oh my gosh. And this, where was, well, you still own this place, you told me earlier.

20 Richter: Yes. Uh-huh.

Laas: And where is it from—

Richter: It is about three miles northwest of Walnut Grove, I'd say.

25 Laas: What did the school look like? Outside, inside, whatever.

30 Richter: The inside is not refinished. I would love to. But I figure if I did, you know, vandals would just go in there because they have done a lot in there in the previous. But I have siding on it now. You know, metal siding. And covered the windows, of course, because you know, it was—

Laas: Yeah.

35 Richter: My dad used it for hay after—years ago.

Laas: Okay.

40 Richter: And just took the windows out. But it is standing and in good condition that way. The inside needs repair.

Laas: Right. So when you went there, what did it look like inside? Was the blackboard in the front?

45 Richter: Oh, yes. A lot of, all across the front was a big blackboard. And it had a little, almost like you'd call a, you stepped up. And this is where the teacher's desk sat. And behind the teacher's desk was the bell rope.

Laas: Okay.

Richter: And of course we had the double seat. Double seats. Two sit in a seat.

5

Laas: Side by side?

Richter: Yes. Two to a seat.

10

Laas: Okay.

Richter: And there were two rows. And usually—and then this great big potbellied stove was all we had had. And then when you first came in, there was a little—what you call it—cloak room. That's where we left our dinner buckets and our coats and everything.

15

Laas: Was the stove wood or coal?

Richter: Coal.

20

Laas: Coal.

Richter: Later on, they burnt wood. But most of the time, coal. And it was hard to heat. I mean, it was really cold in the wintertime.

25

Laas: So did you keep your coats on?

Richter: Sometimes we'd have to go get them.

Laas: Windows on both sides?

30

Richter: Yes it did at that time, mm-hm.

Laas: What direction? Were the windows on the east and the west?

35

Richter: Yes.

Laas: Okay.

Richter: Yes.

40

Laas: It's interesting—

Richter: It faced south. And then of course the bell was on the back thing there.

45

Laas: When you started there, did you have any electricity?

Richter: Oh, no. No, we never had electricity.

Laas: Okay.

5 Richter: Not when, I mean when I went to school.

Laas: Yeah. When you went to school there. It seems like lots of these one-room schools were built with those east and west windows so you got enough light.

10 Richter: Mm-hm. Yes.

Laas: Occasionally one is built on the other axis.

Richter: Yes.

15

Laas: But it's a later one, a later building. It's really kind of interesting. How many children were in the school?

Richter: Oh, I'd say twenty or around such.

20

Laas: Okay. It goes from first grade through eighth?

Richter: First through eighth. And it was the same way when I taught there. And I had around twenty, twenty-five students. But I was disturbed at my dad because he had, he usually hired a lot of people to help. Had quite a bit of land. And they would come, some of them came from Arkansas. And I would just get a bunch of these kids started in school. And they'd decide, they got homesick and wanted to go home. So then here'd come another batch. And it was kind of hard to keep—

25

30 Laas: So you not only had students from first to eighth grade, but the people who were there changed during the year.

Richter: Yes. Yes.

35

Laas: Oh my gosh. What about water? Did you have a well or—

Richter: There was a well there. Yes. And a pump.

Laas: And a pump.

40

Richter: Mm-hm.

Laas: Did everybody have their own cup?

45

Richter: Yes. We had our little cups. Some of the little collapsible ones.

Laas: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Did everybody have a collapsible one?

Richter: No. Not everybody.

5 Laas: Yeah. Yeah. That's interesting.

Richter: Just the regular old tin cups with the handle.

Laas: How about a library? Did you have a library area?

10

Richter: Just a little, yes, back in where that cloak room, just inside of where the cloak room was, there was the little library.

15 Laas: Yeah. And did you rely just on the light from outside? Or did you have coal lamps?
Or—

Richter: Well, if anything going on at night. But daytime we just—that was it.

20 Laas: Yeah. Open fire—

Richter: Yes.

Laas: —with all those kids.

25 Richter: And then when I was in the first grade, I'll never forget. They had what they call a recitation bench. And that's where she, we'd have to go up there and everyone sit on this bench and do, answer, stand up and answer the questions that she asked. So one day we all got to go and like this and squeak—she paddled every one of us.

30 Laas: Did she?!

Richter: Yes.

Laas: And she used a paddle?

35

Richter: A paddle.

Laas: Was it a specially made paddle or her—

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

Richter: —Yes. It looked huge to me.

Laas: Oh, it did as a first grader? (laughter)

45

Richter: Yeah. You know, it had the handle, and then kind of out like this.

Laas: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Just a regular paddle that she used.

Richter: Yes it was.

5

Laas: Oh, gosh. On the outside, did you have any playground equipment or anything?

Richter: Oh, no, no. No playground equipment at all. We, of course, played Annie Over and Black Man and all that stuff. But no.

10

Laas: Any balls and bats?

Richter: Not until later. Not when I was really young.

15

Laas: Not when you were going there. So pretty much all games, no swings or slides or—

Richter: Well, there was a kind of an old little slide. But it was rough, it was dangerous to go down. You'd get splinters and all that stuff.

20

Laas: So mostly games you could—you did play Annie Over, though.

Richter: Yes.

Laas: Over the schoolhouse.

25

Richter: Yes. (laughs) You've heard of that, haven't you?

Laas: I have. I have. When it was raining out or the weather was really bad, what kind of games did you play inside?

30

Richter: Well, we didn't have a lot. Well, we had spelling bees and stuff like that. And maybe some—maybe she'd read a story once in a while.

Laas: Did you have recess, a morning and afternoon recess? And then a nice lunch break?

35

Richter: It seems as though we did. Just very short, though. Maybe 15 minutes.

Laas: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Tell me about your teachers.

40

Richter: Well, my first and second grade one was the one I told you about. I hate to say a lot about her because her ancestors might hear me. (Laas laughs) But she was really strict, I thought, for a first grade teacher.

Laas: What was her name? Do you mind telling me that?

45

Richter: Electa Stokes.

Laas: Electa!

Richter: E-l-e-c-t-a Stokes.

5

Laas: And she was really strict.

Richter: But her, her sister turned out to be my son's teacher.

10

Laas: Oh.

Richter: And I was very fond of her. I mean, she would come and visit school when her sister was teaching there.

15

Laas: Oh, I see. And did you have other teachers as the grades went on?

Richter: Well she was the, she was my first and second grade teacher. When I was in the third grade, they started sending the bus to school at Walnut Grove. So my dad paid tuition and we rode the bus—no, I'm sorry, I have to backtrack there. We moved into Walnut Grove when I was in the third grade and built a new house down on our farm. And I went to third and fourth grade into Walnut Grove. Then moved back home when we had the house built. And went to Oak Grove in the fifth grade. And my teacher there was Ben Bradley. And he was one of my favorite all-time teachers. And after that, I got to have him in high school.

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25

Laas: And you went to Walnut Grove to high school?

Richter: I went to Walnut Grove High School. And he was my history teacher. And I just really liked him.

30

Laas: How was it going back and forth from the one-room into the town and then coming back?

Richter: Oh, I didn't mind it too much. It was different, of course. But the fifth grade was when I went there. Then when I was in the sixth grade is when the bus, buses started running. So then I finished my, the rest of my years up at the Walnut Grove school.

35

Laas: Okay. Was that when you first went into Walnut Grove, was that kind of a shock to go to a town school?

40

Richter: Well it seemed, it seemed different, yes. Quite different.

Laas: And he moved in, Ben Bradley moved into Walnut Grove to teach in there.

Richter: Then he taught in high school, when I was in high school.

45

Laas: High school. Yeah.

Richter: He was a principal.

Laas: What was so special about his teaching?

5

Richter: Well, I don't know. He was just, I guess his personality. I thought he was great, I think one of the things I liked so well about him was that when he was a principal at my high school, my grandfather was from Tennessee and he wanted to take me back to Tennessee with him. And I went to the superintendent and asked him about going. And he said, "Oh, I would hate for you to go. You're taking geometry and you couldn't keep up with that." And so I went to Mr. Bradley and he said, "You go on that trip." He said, "That would be more educational for you than two weeks of school anytime." So I told my grandpa what he said. (laughter) And I went.

10

15

Laas: Perfect. So you had the experience as a student in the one-room schoolhouse. In the very first grades. And then one of the upper grades. So you kind of had the experience of being one of the older children and one of the youngest.

20

Richter: Sort of in the middle. Fifth grade would be kind of in the middle.

Laas: Yeah. In the middle? Okay.

Richter: Yeah. I guess.

25

Laas: I always think of fifth grades as half grown. (laughs) I would never underestimate a fifth grader. Do you think you got a good start in education in a one-room schoolhouse?

Richter: Yes. Yes, I do.

30

Laas: I don't want to say which did you like better, but which do you think made the greatest impression on you?

Richter: You mean which school?

35

Laas: Yeah. Yeah. In the one-room or in a larger school where you were in separate grades?

Richter: Well of course there was more activity when I got to [Walnut Grove].

40

Laas: I guess maybe what I'm getting at is how valuable was it to be a younger one and hear those older students? Or be an older one and helping those younger ones. Did you think about that at all when you were—

45

Richter: Not a whole lot. But I see what you mean. Because the older students, they were an impression on me. Yeah. It was nice having someone older to kind of, some of them were my second cousins, so they kind of watched over me.

Laas: Kept you in line?

Richter: Mm-hm.

5 Laas: Yeah, protected you. And you walked all the time. And it was a good two miles. What are some of the activities you remember from school? I mean, Christmas parties or Halloween or—

10 Richter: Oh. Well, we used to have plays. And then we'd go to Bolivar [Missouri] and enter in some of those contests and things. And then we would have, of course we had pie suppers. And we had, I could remember having kind of like a fair at the school one time. Because I remember I took this big pumpkin. Of course, my grandpa had helped me raise it. But I got the prize on this big pumpkin. So this one old lady, she wanted that pumpkin real bad. And so I didn't much want to give it to her. But my grandpa said, yeah, I think you should just go
15 ahead and give it to her. We had more pumpkins. So I did. And I thought well, maybe she'll give me a dime or something. Guess what she gave me.

Laas: I have no idea.

20 Richter: A handkerchief.

Laas: (laughs) Oh! I thought you were going to say a dollar or something. A handkerchief!

25 Richter: That wasn't much of a, wasn't much of a prize for a child from a prize pumpkin.

Laas: No! (laughs)

Richter: I'll never forget that. I wasn't very old, but I'll never forget that.

30 Laas: Oh, my. So at this fair, you weren't selling the things that you produced.

Richter: No, no. People just brought and to show them, what they had grown.

35 Laas: To show them—and she gave you a handkerchief. (laughs)

Richter: Gave me a handkerchief and ran off with my pumpkin.

Laas: Tell me how they ran the pie fairs.

40 Richter: How they ran what?

Laas: The pie fairs. Or the—

45 Richter: Oh, pie suppers?

Laas: Pie suppers.

Richter: Well, they would, usually the girls, they'd decorate their boxes real pretty and have their pie in there. And of course it would be mainly their boyfriend that—

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

Richter: —would bid on their pies. And then of course the others would bid high, make it so they'd have to pay a whole bunch for those pies. And then you got to eat with that person. Then we would have like a jar of pickles for the most lovesick couple. A bar of soap for the
10 man with the dirtiest feet and a rolling pen for the most henpecked husband. And people would bid on this, you see. And things like that.

Laas: Now were these mostly, like the lovesick couple, those wouldn't be students, they would be—
15

Richter: No, they'd be in the community.

Laas: In the community.

20 Richter: Yes.

Laas: So it was great fun for the adults to do that.

Richter: Yes. Uh-huh. And then, I think, a penny a vote for the prettiest girl, maybe a box of
25 candy for the prettiest girl. And things like that. It was a lot of fun.

Laas: And Halloween programs? Christmas?

Richter: Yes. We'd have, we'd dress up in costumes for Halloween. And we would have a
30 Christmas—

Laas: What kind of costumes did you like to do?

Richter: Well I guess it was, this is when I was teaching, I guess. My husband dressed up in
35 my grandma's bathing suit, bathing suit like they wore years ago.

Laas: (laughs) The old-fashioned—yeah.

Richter: It came clear down below his knees—and I wore her riding habit. But I can't
40 remember what—well, mainly, I think it was just like, I think I was a witch or something like that, when I was in grade school. Yeah, that was a lot of fun.

Laas: Christmas parties?

Richter: We had, always had a Christmas program. We had a huge tree and we got to decorate it, of course, no fancy decorations like we have today. Maybe popcorn and cranberries and then homemade things that we put on there.

5 Laas: And what kind of a program? Would you do recitations and things like that?

Richter: Yes, uh-huh.

Laas: Did you work a long time on memorizing those things?

10

Richter: Oh, yeah.

Laas: And then all the parents came. And these were—

15 Richter: All the parents.

Laas: In the schoolroom.

Richter: Yeah. Came to the schoolroom. It was kind of crowded, but that's what we had.

20

Laas: And an end of year party, maybe? Did you have—

Richter: End of the year?

25 Laas: End of the school year?

Richter: Oh, we always had a picnic, kind of like a picnic.

Laas: Picnic? Uh-huh. And did the parents come to that, too? Or was it just for kids?

30

Richter: I think they did, yes. But I'll never forget my last day of school, when I was teaching—but you probably want to ask me about my younger—

Laas: Well, right now. We'll get to the teaching. We'll get to the teaching. Uh, something else. Oh, when did school start?

35

Richter: Well, in September.

Laas: In September. And then when did it end?

40

Richter: Usually in May.

Laas: In May. So you had a full nine months.

45 Richter: Yes. Yes.

Laas: Of school. Okay. I was wondering. And school started at nine? Nine in the morning?

Richter: Yes. And out about four.

5 Laas: And out about four. Okay. I knew I'd forgotten something. And those were two things I had. Did all the kids in the schools have chores? I mean, did somebody have to erase the blackboard and clean the erasers?

Richter: They—she just chose someone to do that at different times.

10

Laas: Was that kind of an honor to get to do that—

Richter: Oh, yeah! We thought it was.

15 Laas: Yeah, okay. So carrying water and carrying wood in. Erasers. Blackboard. Other kinds of chores?

Richter: Some of the older boys would carry the coal buckets.

20 Laas: Yeah. The coal bucket.

Richter: And the wood. But we just burned the coal when I was there.

Laas: What did you take for your lunch every day?

25

Richter: Well, usually ham. I always had a good—I thought—some of the kids didn't have all that much. But we'd swap back and forth, swap things.

Laas: Some things don't change.

30

Richter: No. And biscuits. Ham and biscuits. And maybe some fruit. And then had these little, I used to take these little cold cream jars with peaches in it. And maybe a little bit of whipped cream on top of that, sometimes. That was a treat. And some cousins across the ranch there, she raised those little bitty yellow tomatoes, those little pear tomatoes. And they'd bring them in their lunch. And we'd have deviled eggs. We'd have, well, just pretty good lunch.

35

Laas: Yeah. Yeah.

40 Richter: Of course our lunchboxes were the tin—

Laas: Yeah. Of course. And you still live in the area. So do you keep in contact, or did you keep, through the years, in contact with any of those kids you went to one-room school with?

45 Richter: Yeah. Most of them.

Laas: Most of them? And most of them continued to live in the area?

Richter: Uh, not really. Not a whole lot of them stayed in around.

5 Laas: Yeah. But you just kept in touch with them.

Richter: And we still have school reunions. I've had three different Oak Grove school reunions. At the Walnut Grove, we have one every five years.

10 Laas: Now let's talk some about your teaching career. When did you start teaching?

Richter: Well, in '42.

Laas: '42. So you graduated from high school in what year?

15

Richter: In '39.

Laas: '39. And then did you go to Missouri State?

20 Richter: Yes.

Laas: Okay. And how did you happen to get this job teaching in the same school that you had gone to?

25 Richter: Well, it was close to my parents' home. And my dad didn't own the property at that time. And I knew most all the board members. So I just went around and asked for the job.

Laas: And got it!

30 Richter: And got it.

Laas: And you had had a couple of years of college then.

Richter: Actually, three.

35

Laas: Three.

Richter: And I had my certificate, of course.

40 Laas: Okay.

Richter: I just, yeah. But—

45 Laas: So no wonder you got the job. You had more education than most who started, who were in one-room—

Richter: Well, probably so.

Laas: And how long did you teach there?

5 Richter: Just the one year. Just the one term. My husband wouldn't let me alone. (laughter)

Laas: So you wanted to get married?

Richter: Yes, I did. And he went to the service.

10

Laas: Oh, of course.

Richter: And it was, well, at that time, then he was, of course, he was in the service. And I went ahead and taught. And then, well, of course the war being on, I think they started
15 having school on Saturdays. And they did this, it was nice for me because I got out in April that way. And then I went out to Oregon, where he was.

Laas: Where in Oregon?

20 Richter: Well, Medford, at Camp White. His first [unclear] And then later on he went to Corvallis, which is Camp Adair. So I spent about a year out there.

Laas: Okay.

25 Richter: And the mailman, I knew him real well. And of course I was wanting to get letters from him. So the kids, some of my students would go out and meet the mailman every day. And I thought it was nice of him. He'd stop and give them my mail.

Laas: Yeah. Well, that is nice.

30

Richter: If I had a letter.

Laas: That is nice. And then did you, did he eventually go overseas?

35 Richter: Yes. The last day of school, there was this one boy that was always forgetting something and wanting to go home. You know, and he'd do that just real often just to get to leave school. He'd say, "Oh, I forgot something at home. I have to go back and get it." And I thought okay, go ahead. Well, I'm glad I did because they had all made me a block with their names on it for a quilt. And my aunt had made the Oak Grove school for the middle of it.
40 And then each student had their name. And so then the Oak Grove church pieced that for me and made me a quilt.

Laas: How wonderful!

45 Richter: With all the children's names on it.

Laas: How wonderful.

Richter: I thought that was nice.

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

Laas: So when were you married?

Richter: When was I married?

10

Laas: Yeah.

Richter: The seventh of November, 1942. I had my 70th anniversary this year.

15 Laas: Um, and it was okay with the school for you to be married. You started that year teaching unmarried. And got married.

Richter: Yes.

20 Laas: But you knew most of the board members. I just say that because I interviewed a woman the other day who got married kind of in that same space of time. Only earlier, years earlier. But her future father-in-law was one of the board members so she taught the rest of the year.

25 Richter: Of course I didn't ask their permission.

Laas: No. No. (laughter) Absolutely not. Then at the end of that year, you were traveling with your husband, moving from these bases, in Oregon and—

30 Richter: Well I just went, I went to Medford. And then when he went on maneuvers, I came back home. When he moved to another camp, then I went there.

Laas: Okay. And did you go back to teaching?

35 Richter: No.

Laas: It was just the one year?

Richter: I had several offers. But no, I never did.

40

Laas: How did you organize your day when you taught there? I mean, you've got children of all ages.

45 Richter: It was really hard. You had like the fifth grade over here maybe in this corner and the eighth grade over in this corner. And I had the little ones that there were four in the fourth grade, I'll never forget that. And two in the first grade. No, two in the second grade. I didn't

have anyone in first. Two in the second grade. And just like that, you had, it was hard. You know, because, and I think it would be hard on the children, because they'd have to be listening. They couldn't not hear. And it was kind of hard.

5 Laas: But your experience as a student did that, you didn't think it was hard, did you?

Richter: Well, not as bad. No, not when I was a student.

Laas: Perspective changes sometimes

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Richter: Yes, and you could spend so much time with these, and so much time with these. And then, it was strange, but yet it was—

Laas: Did you enjoy that year?

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Richter: Yes, I did. Mm-hm.

Laas: Were you exhausted at the end of each day?

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Richter: Well, almost. (laughs) I had an eighth grade boy, though, he built the fire for me. He'd come early in the morning and build the fire for me.

Laas: Did you have to pay him to come in early and build the fire?

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Richter: I did. I didn't have to. Well, I don't, I did, I paid him myself. I don't know if they would've paid him or not. But probably not. Because I had such a big check.

Laas: Do you remember how much you were paid?

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Richter: Seventy dollars.

Laas: A month?

Richter: Mm-hm.

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Laas: Seventy dollars a month. Well, seventy dollars went farther then. Seventy dollars a month. And you could live at home.

Richter: I lived with my parents, yeah.

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Laas: Did you have any discipline problems or anything?

Richter: Well, just one older boy. He was kind of a, I had to kind of watch him. He turned out all right, but I was kind of leery of him.

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Laas: Now earlier when we were talking about you as a student, you thought of something to talk about in your experience as a teacher. And I don't remember now exactly what the subject was. But what are some of your feelings about teaching in a one-room schoolhouse? Or stories to tell? Or what made that year memorable?

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Richter: Well of course, I guess my mind was partly on my husband.

Laas: Absolutely.

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Richter: But I feel like I did the best I could. And the children, they understood, they were all, and especially the older ones. And they helped me quite a bit. The older ones and, one girl, well, when I, then I had the car, from my husband, after I was married I had the car to drive to school. And she, I'd bring her home. But she helped me sweep and clean up and everything. Which was nice. But one thing funny, see, I got the car. And I was driving it to school. I see some lady down here on the corner. She was kind of the nosy type. Well my husband would come pay me a visit at the school before we got married, before he went back to California. And then he came back to Missouri to be inducted because he had a, he was a shipyard foreman in California, in the shipyards. Which is the youngest guy that had ever done that. And they hated to lose him, but Uncle Sam thought he was too young to have that kind of a job. So they were going to draft him. So he came back to Missouri to be drafted. And that week, I guess before we got married, he would come to school once in a while. He would help the kids with their arithmetic and stuff like that. He wasn't there a lot, but just now and then. Well this old lady saw the car. Well then after I got married, and she said, she told someone, "I don't know how those kids learn anything. That boy's up there all the time." (Laas laughs) And then another man, I would play, I played baseball with the kids, which they thought that was something. And I could catch their flies and all that. And those boys, they really thought I was something for the teacher to played ball and—and this man, he passed there and saw us playing ball a time or two. Well, it was recess. He said, "I don't think those kids ever go to school. They just play ball all the time." (Laas laughs)

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Laas: But he didn't object to you playing ball. That man.

Richter: Well, I don't suppose so.

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Laas: Maybe he didn't recognize—

Richter: If he did, he never told me. But he just thought we played ball more than we had school. Because it would be the time that he'd pass, we'd be playing ball.

40

Laas: Would happen to be recess time. I keep thinking of things that maybe, I haven't been able to articulate very well. But do you think going to that one-room schoolhouse, or teaching in a one-room school, had a lasting impression on you?

Richter: Yes.

45

Laas: Do you?

Richter: Yes I do.

Laas: How?

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Richter: Well it's just an experience that you don't, well, especially the younger people, they can't hardly comprehend how it could be done. But I feel I accomplished something by doing that. Then the next year that school consolidated. So.

10 Laas: Now did you go on and teach later in your career? Or was that your only—

Richter: That's the only time I taught.

15 Laas: That's the only time you taught. Having taught in a junior high at one time in my career, it just boggles my mind thinking about all those different things going on.

Richter: I did do a lot of substituting later on in both Walnut and Ash Grove.

20 Laas: At—the courses you took at Missouri State, do you think they were as helpful as what you learned by simply remembering what your teachers had done? Did you model your teaching after somebody?

25 Richter: Not really. Of course I had some good classes and I had some good teachers at SMS. The Hennekys. They were sisters. And they were both real good. And several teachers that I was fond of. Some of them I weren't too fond of. But that goes along with it, doesn't it?

Laas: Yes, it does. Yes, it does.

30 Richter: Are you familiar with SMS? Teachers serve teachers.

Laas: Well, I am in the history department. But not beyond that. I have several friends in the history department.

35 Richter: You've heard of Dr. Virginia Craig.

Laas: Yes.

40 Richter: She was my, I guess, English literature. And she would scare you. I mean, she would—

[End Track 4. Begin Track 5.]

45 Richter: Miss [Cruzzle?] And you were expected to jump right up and answer the question immediately. Well, she, I was making, back then it was an E instead of an A. I was making an E in there. And I got one of my first migraines. I didn't know what was happening. And I had to get up, I thought what's going on, and I had to get up and I went down to the restroom.

And as I left the room, she didn't have any sympathy for anybody that got sick. She didn't think you should get sick. And she'd get up there in front and try to illustrate how we looked with heels on. She didn't think you should wear high heels. And because I left the room that day, I got an S.

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Laas: One day.

Richter: I explained to her that I didn't, I couldn't, I didn't know what was happening. I said I didn't want to fall over on the floor. But that's what it was. I was having a migraine.

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Laas: So you definitely didn't model your teaching after her style?

Richter: No. No.

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Laas: Did you have your students memorize things and give recitations like you had done in school?

Richter: Some. Not very, not as much. No.

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Laas: Well is there anything else, any stories that you'd like to tell about your experience as a teacher or as a student that we ought to get on this record?

Richter: Let me think. Well, one thing we did when I was a student, we did have a wood pile out there. And for future use. And when it was snowing, and we made forts out of these—
different rooms, even, out of that wood. And I guess it was kind of dangerous. It could have caved in on us. But and the snow outside and all over. That was a lot of fun. And of course our bathrooms, one was in one corner, the boys' was in the left hand corner and the girls in the right hand corner. As far apart as they could get. And they had little fences around them. They were rock and had little fences around them, so—

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Laas: Okay. Oh, they were rock?

Richter: So nobody could see in it.

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Laas: Yeah. Yeah. The fences were rock?

Richter: No. No. The building was kind of like rock.

Laas: Okay. And one at one end of the school property—

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Richter: Yes. And one at the other. Uh-huh.

Laas: And one at the other. Okay. Yeah, well.

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Richter: And of course it was, of course recess was the most fun.

Laas: Right. Right. But basically games that you played without any equipment.

Richter: Mm-hm.

5 Laas: Except for—well, the softball was when you were teaching.

Richter: Yeah. That was when I was teaching. We didn't play baseball when I was in grade school. Just those little old fashioned games.

10 Laas: Hopscotch?

Richter: Yes.

Laas: Did you have jump ropes?

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Richter: I can't remember that at the country school. But in, when I was in Walnut Grove, I remember. And jacks.

Laas: Jacks.

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Richter: Jacks. We played jacks.

Laas: Did the boys play marbles?

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Richter: Yes. Marbles.

Laas: Did the girls play marbles?

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Richter: Not then. I wanted to, but they didn't they didn't, very many girls didn't. Then we played also king on the mountain. This is when I was in like the fourth grade in Walnut Grove. Had this big old pile of cinders, I guess. And you get kind of dirty in [unclear]

Laas: (laughs) Yeah. Well, are there any other, anything else we should add to this?

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Anything else you'd like to say about this? Let's see if I've—I think I've covered those questions. I really appreciate your doing this. It's, adding these stories together. You know, the pie suppers, and there are so many things that were alike, but each one is different. And it's very nice. Thank you for coming in today.

Richter: Well, you're very welcome.

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[End Track 4. Begin Track 5.]

Laas: —do it.

45

Richter: Okay.

Laas: Okay. We have one more story from June Richter. Go right ahead.

Richter: My little cousin was in the second grade and my grandpa asked: "Does she ever whip you?" [cousin]: "No, she just looks at you." (laughter)

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[End Interview.]