

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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**BETTIE SCHWARZ INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL**

- Bettie Schwarz: I am Bettie Schwarz, a native of the great State of Texas but I've lived in Missouri in St. Louis since I was 23 years old.
- Blanche Touhill: Talk about your family and your siblings and some teacher in elementary or high school that encouraged you or was it your family or a cousin or a grandfather. How did you get to know that you really were very capable?
- Bettie Schwarz: Oh, let's see. I grew up in a small town in Texas. My mother married a college athlete whose father was a rancher and she moved to what she thought was the middle of nowhere, back in the 1930's, I guess. My dad's family came from a long line of Texans with the...I'm not sure exactly which relative came with Moses Austin's original 300 and settled in the same place where I grew up. The name of the town is West Columbia and it was the first capital of the Republic of Texas, was where Santa Ana was chained and it has an awful lot of historical...a lot of historical events happened there that are in Texas history. So I was very well versed with Texas history. My mother, on the other hand, is from Mississippi. Her father was a lawyer. My mother's father wore ascots and my dad's father had Bull Durham hanging from his pocket and I'm a product of that. I went to school in the small town through middle school and then my mother insisted that I go to boarding school as she had done. So I spent my high school years in a boarding school and loved it. I never felt that someone was sending me away. My mother told me I had a great opportunity that a lot of people didn't have and so that was exactly the way I felt about it. I met people from all over the world that were sent to boarding school so it was very exciting. I learned a lot of things that I would have known otherwise and I guess the person that certainly inspired me to move on was my mother, who always said "I could have

been,” “I could have done, but I didn’t” and when you hear that, you think, well, I’m not going to ever say that to anybody. I will pursue something and certainly grew up at the time where you could be a teacher, a secretary or, if you majored in History of Art, there wasn’t much for you to do but be a volunteer to a museum. So I chose education and stayed with that field until I...well, I guess I still am in education.

Blanche Touhill: Did you have siblings?

Bettie Schwarz: I have one sister. She’s two-and-a-half years younger than I am. She was also sent to boarding school. I went to boarding school in Texas and my mother was a big politico, very...well, Texas is kind of interesting. When I was real little, it was a Democratic party and then it switched to the Republican party but when Lyndon Johnson was in the White House, my mother spent a lot of time in Washington, D.C. and my sister, in turn, went to boarding school there and then she went on to college on the East Coast and I stayed in Texas. I’m a Texas girl all the way through.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you go to college? Was it Texas Christian?

Bettie Schwarz: I started college at the University of Texas which was the big, exciting university and after coming out of a boarding school, I really didn’t know how to learn on my own because there was no one standing over me when I got to the University of Texas and, very surprisingly, an honor graduate which I had been, made two F’s, two D’s and a C my first semester, much to the horror of my mother, who picked me up, drove me up to TCU where she had graduated, who knows when, and that’s where I did my undergraduate work.

Blanche Touhill: What was your major there, education?

Bettie Schwarz: Well, after about five or six majors, I graduated in Elementary Education.

Blanche Touhill: So then, what did you do when you graduated from college?

Bettie Schwarz: I always wanted to explore the world and, like I say, a lot of that had to do with going to a boarding school where a lot of the students were there that’s parents worked in foreign countries, particularly in the oil business in Texas. You found people in South America, in Kuwait, in Saudi Arabia, whose parents were with Texaco or one of the oil companies and the kids would stay in boarding school in Texas. So that’s what I wanted to do; I

wanted to see the world. I went with some friends of mine, hostelling in Europe and we decided to get a job and I wound up finding a job on an Army post right outside of Munich and it was during the build up to Viet Nam. A lot of the fathers were being shipped to Viet Nam and they had all the dependents there and they did not have enough state-side hires, teachers, at that time. You had to have two years of experience, which I didn't have but two of us stayed and I taught on an Army post for a year, which was another very interesting experience. That's also where I met my husband.

Blanche Touhill: So you go back to the States and you go into the teaching profession?

Bettie Schwarz: I come back to the States and because I met my husband in Europe, he was coming back to the University of Missouri in Columbia to get a Master's Degree and I decided...I told my mother I had to take some more courses too and I was going to take them at the University of Missouri. She never understood why but perhaps taking more courses was okay and I came over to St. Louis to get a job and did not know one school district from the other but was very fortunate in that the one that granted me the interview was the Ladue School District. So that's where I began and after I had been there for six years, I qualified...well, there was a sabbatical leave program at the time and I don't think there had been a female that had gotten a sabbatical leave; I'm almost positive there had never been one that did and any time someone tells me, "Oh, you can't do that," that is just what makes me say, "Oh, yeah, well, let's hide and watch." So, I was very determined to get a sabbatical leave and did get a sabbatical leave, got my Master's at Washington U and my Doctorate at St. Louis University.

Blanche Touhill: So then you returned to the Ladue Schools as a teacher?

Bettie Schwarz: Once I finished my sabbatical leave, I was given a job in the central office as a mid-level district administrator and stayed there, I guess it was 20 years because I left with 25 years in. I was the kind of person that just liked to do everything. Ladue is a very small school district so I started off doing the publicity, the house [inaudible 09:02:4] and the gifted program because gifted programs were rather new. I moved then into elementary education and that was when technologies first started and I was just amazed with the potential that I saw with the computers. Now, we had nobody at all in the entire school district that knew what to do with one.

Blanche Touhill: What year was that, about?

Bettie Schwarz: That would have been about 1980. Yeah, it was about 1980 and parents were buying the old Apple IIE or the first computers for schools and then expected the school district to do something with it. So, unfortunately, nobody knew what to do with it and one didn't do much good. So that also was about the time when some of the East Coast schools were starting computer camps for kids, very expensive computer camps. Ladue had always had a summer program, and by the way, I was also in charge of all the summer programs. So I thought maybe the thing to do would be begin with a computer camp and all these kids, instead of going to the East Coast or wherever, we'd have one right there. So, to do that, you have to basically have teachers that know what to do with the equipment and what was that going to be? Well, I had read several books. One was a book called Mind Storms by Seymour Papert at MIT who talked about a constructivist approach to learning and the computer is an object to think with and I was just fascinated with this book and decided that maybe we needed to do some of the things that he was talking about in the book. Also, word processing was just beginning. It was very, very simple word processing but I knew we had excellent composition teachers if we could couple it with the word processing. Then I knew that we had to do some kind of training. So one day...don't ask me how I came up with this...I decided that if we gave the teachers a computer in lieu of salary and they worked it off, they did the training and they taught in the summer, we'd give them the computer to begin with and everybody...the computers were brand new and a lot of them have told me since then, "Well, my son..."...or "my daughter..." or "my...wanted a computer." It sounded like a good way to do it and the first Apple IIEs were, like, \$3,500 and way back then, that's probably twice as much as now and so we started the courses and I paired...in Seymour's book, it was pairing people together. His phrase was always "ask three before me" so it was a very collaborative type experience. Then we realized everybody didn't have babysitters so we just brought everybody's kids in too and let them be all part of it. Pretty soon people got so they knew quite a bit about the technology. Then here came the summer school and it was, oh, my gosh...

Blanche Touhill: Did you do that after school hours or something?

- Bettie Schwarz: Yes, after school hours and on weekends.
- Blanche Touhill: And you bought the computers?
- Bettie Schwarz: We bought the computers. I went to the board. The board bought the computers. Rather than paying someone at the end, we just contracted that they were going to take the training and they were going to teach all summer but since they were going to teach all summer on a computer, it would be wise to give them the computer before they started so when they went home, they could practice. So anyway...
- Blanche Touhill: They were paid with the computer?
- Bettie Schwarz: They were paid with the computer.
- Blanche Touhill: How many were in this pilot group?
- Bettie Schwarz: Thirty or forty. I had more...
- Blanche Touhill: That's all levels, elementary and secondary?
- Bettie Schwarz: Yes, and I took the training too. I even had principals that wanted to do it and I took the training and I went in. I decided, who was I going to pair myself with? Well, there was the math teacher, the high level math teacher at the high school. That's exactly where I want to be, right? Well, she didn't know anything about it either and it was very interesting to see what emerged. I mean, it was really...the ones that were the most successful were really creative thinkers: "What can we do with this that hasn't been done?" and all of a sudden people started migrating and wanted to pair with those teachers because they had all these original ideas. So, the teachers said, "We're really scared to go in and teach. What are these parents expecting of us?" and I said, "It's a summer camp. We can do anything. We can play games; we can do a little word processing. What we're going to try to do is figure out what we're supposed to do with all of this," and then they said one other thing: "Well, this pairing has been great in the professional development and I don't want to go into a classroom by myself. Can we pair the teachers?"
- Blanche Touhill: So you'd have team teaching?
- Bettie Schwarz: So we had team teaching and, like I said, it was in the summer. There wasn't anything that you had to do and I made the classes very small. Oh,

the other thing that I failed to mention there was, I sent out the brochure in about January for the computer camp. Well, it was oversubscribed. I mean, we had so many people and they weren't just Ladue School residents. People all over wanted their kids to take the courses. That just, like I say, really scared the staff. But anyway, once we started, everybody learned together. The kids learned with the teachers and the teachers learned with the kids and by the time we got finished, it was like, "Wow! If we can do this, we can do anything" and I've always believed...now, of course, I hired the teachers in Ladue too, for years, but I always knew that if we couldn't do it there, it couldn't be done. If you have such outstanding teachers and lucky to have more resources than a lot of places have, if you can't do it there, it can't be done. So, it was always very euphoric when you realized, "Wow! Look what we just did!" So you had this real esprit de corps with the staff. I loved teaching or I loved being involved with the school district. It was a lot of work and I look back on it now, nights and weekends and all the kinds of things one does but it was kind of, what together we can do and when you see that happen, you want to do it again.

Blanche Touhill: So what did you do in the fall when the rest of the children came back? Did you introduce the computers into the school?

Bettie Schwarz: We had after school classes on a tuition basis, just moved them all to the...and it still was, how are you going to integrate this into the school, and what we wanted to do was not computer-assisted learning. There were a lot of computer-assisted learning. We wanted to use tools, as I say, as an object to think with. So what are you doing? You're doing programming which was Logo at the time; you're writing with word processors; databases; spreadsheets. But instead of it being like, "I'm going to teach you how to use a spreadsheet" or "I'm going to teach you how to use a database," it was to use a database to solve problems. In other words, why make a database? What's the purpose? So, again, creative teachers. One of them one day came in and had this fabulous project and it was when St. Louis was considering whether to build a stadium in the county or in the city and what she did was she had her students interview 10 people, diverse people.

Blanche Touhill: Each one?

Bettie Schwarz: Each kid, what does everybody think. Well, you multiply that by the kids in all the classes and then you maybe had 50 kids, so times 10, you have 500. Then, that was entered into a database: "Let me show you how to put this into a database." Well, the learning didn't stop there. What was the most interesting was the problem-solving: "Who do you think wants the stadium in the city? Who do you think doesn't want a stadium at all? Is there any pattern to this? Can we graph this kind of information?" Well, since they had been involved in the ground floor and they knew who they had interviewed, it was completely different. I mean, I don't think that any of those children are probably database builders now but they certainly understand how powerful one can be. So, we started after school clubs that were always full and you could try anything with them because it was after school and, of course, the things that really were effective worked their way into the system and it was the same teachers and everybody was...it went K through 12.

Blanche Touhill: How many years did it take you to...do all those students in the Ladue School System have access to a computer?

Bettie Schwarz: You mean, at home?

Blanche Touhill: No, at the school?

Bettie Schwarz: There was never one-to-one. We started off with labs.

Blanche Touhill: Labs, okay. So they could go in at a certain time during the day or it was part of a class. The teacher would reserve the room for part of the day in order to have a lesson or give them time to make their database?

Bettie Schwarz: Yes, and the other thing that...when I think about myself, I think I'm probably as resourceful as...I'm not creative but resourceful. I can spot a good idea when I see it and back to that early training, I sat down one day with a librarian and she was very enthusiastic about all this and I thought, you know, we should make those libraries into computer centers too and I was very good at finding people that were enthusiastic and were able to transform the way we had been doing certain things into a new way of doing it. So, the libraries all had sections that were computer labs and then, of course, you eventually put computers in the classroom and I've been gone from there many years now but my daughter-in-law is a teacher at Ladue High School and now they're talking about one-to-one computing. We make products for schools, technology products and the

biggest problem with putting the things...the bigger problem with technology in schools is not the lines; the federal government has put the lines in to every school in the country. It's not even buying the equipment. It's, what are you going to do with it once you get it? So, a lot of it is professional development. The truth of the matter is, in teaching, so many teachers are in one room. They may be doing something great but five teachers down the hall have no idea because they don't see that. They're teaching at the same time. So, ways to share, ways to share your successes and types of collaboration that I think is very important.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to comment on schools today?

Bettie Schwarz: Well, I think we have great schools many places. Are we reaching everybody? No. What are the reasons for that? I think they are manifold. I mean, I think education has to change to be able to educate everybody to their fullest. I think technology can play a huge role in that. For example, we're working on a project now in my office. It's basically going to be flip learning or blended learning or whatever you want to call it where children perhaps do their reading on a computer at home and maybe some of their research and then when they're in the classroom or working on things that really need the help of a teacher such as labs or various types of projects. Now, then you get into, what can you do to ensure that every child has a computer at home? Well, it's interesting because if you look at the data out there, almost everybody, including low income people, have smart phones. What can you do with the smart phones? Well, you can actually do quite a bit with them. Then you have the problem like you've certainly probably read about Los Angeles where they gave a laptop to every child and, in the first month, 800 of them were stolen or missing or whatever have you. How do you get around that? I don't have all the answers to it. I think the technology will get cheaper. I think it becomes very engaging...students are very engaged with that. What you have to make sure is that what you're giving them is better than what they had before or it's a moot point. Technology for technology's sake is nothing. I don't know that I have all the answers. I think we need smaller class size. I think you need to get children engaged in participatory learning rather than, you're just sitting up spouting out information and they are to memorize your facts. I think there are probably many children in this country that don't know a thing about Columbus other than 1492; they did get that. I was just talking earlier



about history. I hated history. Why did I hate history? Because that's all that I was given, was read the book, answer the questions in the back and I got very good at being able to answer the questions in the back without having to read the information anyway. I love history now. Why do I love history? Well, I've been involved in projects that I went, oh, my goodness, I didn't know that. Let me dig deeper, and now, there are ways that I can dig deeper right there in the confounds of my own home. So I think technology plays a big role. I think that somehow we have to create a work ethic for kids too. The kids that don't succeed very well have a very poor work ethic. Now, a lot of that comes from the home. I can look back to my mother, as I was talking about earlier, and I didn't have a choice. I was going to do what was expected of me and she was down at the school all the time anyway, which a lot of children in this day and age don't have that opportunity. I don't think it's really money. I think it's a reallocation of resources and I think obviously you need the very best teachers. I also...and I know a lot of teachers would be very upset to hear me say this...I think teachers should be given tenure on merit, not years of service and I know from experience that, just because somebody's been there 30 years doesn't make them better than somebody that's been there five and I think our kids deserve the very best of teachers. Not everybody is cut out for being a teacher. I actually, looking at myself, was a lot better administrator than I was a teacher and I could look at all the teachers and there were some that were just so fantastic you wish every kid could have them and others that went to fine schools, were not as good. So it's just...and I think part of it is loving the profession, really going the extra mile because you really love it, not because it's a job and it's 3:00 o'clock and the kids go home and "Adios!"

Blanche Touhill: What other things did you do in the Ladue schools that you look back on and say, that was the right thing to do?

Bettie Schwarz: Well, I learned everything there. The reason that I can do what I do now is I worked for a superintendent that basically gave me the opportunity to fail and he always called it "a boy named Sue, go do it" and when you have that...and I think in some degree, that's what you need to do with kids. I didn't want to fail and by doing what was very difficult at the time, I rose to the next level and if somebody had always done it for me...and I think particularly a lot of women back then were given jobs but they never were given the opportunity to work in finance or they were never

given the opportunity...you basically did something that was softer, where you weren't going to screw up because, of course you were going to have a baby and once you had the baby, you weren't going to stick with it anyway. I also remember when I went into personnel in...let's see, when would that have been? That was in the '70s...looking back through the files and realizing that back in the '50s, actually the job descriptions that were sent out by a place like Ladue basically wanted a married man for a principal and it would go on to describe exactly what this married man was going to be like and so if you were a female, why apply? It was pretty clear you weren't going to get the job anyway. I was fortunate, I came along at the time where people were looking for women and if I hadn't come along at that time...I know in my doctoral program, I think there were three women; all the rest of them were men. But because I was a woman, people were looking for women and so I got an extra opportunity but if you aren't good at what you're doing, you certainly aren't going to rise. I mean, you're just a token somewhere and I have to hand it to the person that hired me because he pushed me and pushed me and pushed me and many times it was rather painful and many times I was really mad but because he did that, the next time it was easier and I learned how to do, just, you name it, I can do it. I learned more than I did in college or anywhere else. I remember the first time we sat down with a spreadsheet and he said, "Look through the district's..."...and it probably wasn't even a spreadsheet then; it was probably numbers and cells..."look to see maybe where we can make some changes." Well, I didn't even know what the little carrot signs meant when they were on either side of a number at the bottom and so I didn't want to say anything so I would sit and study these spreadsheets and get some kind of an accounting book or something that I could look at so when I went back I didn't sound so stupid. Over time, you learned a great deal. That's all helped me with what I do now because if I didn't have those skills, I clearly would fail.

Blanche Touhill: What role do you think that public education plays in American society?

Bettie Schwarz: Well, it's what brought us...I mean, if we hadn't had a public education system, we wouldn't have an educated workforce. So I think that it gives everybody an education. Unfortunately, there are some places that are better than others. If you look at the country, it's a mosaic, it's a mosaic of types of people...some of what you learn is who you go to school with.

So if you go to school with people that are challenged and they're doing all these kind of things, it's a lot easier for you to be motivated than if you're with people that are trying to figure out, how can we get out of here. So it gets back to...and I don't know the answer, but I'm looking here at a picture of obviously immigrants, European immigrants back in the 1800's, I believe that would be, that came with absolutely no education and have their offspring and the offspring after that are leading major corporations. I was also amazed with...I was in Ladue during the Viet Nam war, or at the end of it and after the boat left and all that, there were Asian kids that were coming from, I guess Viet Nam, that studied so hard, they did so well in a place where they had no privilege like a lot of the students there and would not be living...I mean, they would be living in...numbers of people in apartment complexes on the edges of the district. So a lot of it is a belief that education will give you opportunities and I think it can be demonstrated. I think that some people, unfortunately, it didn't work for them and they will pass that on to their kids and there's a multitude of reasons as why they feel that way but I think public education is the backbone of America and if you want to have private education and religious education and all these things, I think it's great that there are alternatives but public education is really the backbone for it all, including public universities.

Blanche Touhill: Talk to me about what happened to you then when you decided to leave Ladue.

Bettie Schwarz: Well, that had to do with just looking at another opportunity. As I was saying, I had done all this work in technology. My husband that I met in Germany, was a film maker and he had his own business and I had mine and this had gone on for years and he was meeting a person that had one of the big studios in town about buying editing equipment together. They were close by, at a restaurant close by and I decided to join them for lunch and during that lunch, the person with the studio had said there had been someone coming...a man had come into the office that wanted to sell his company and that he had made films which were made at that studio for education with the botanical garden and they were really good and we should think about buying it, buying the company. So, we decided to take a look at it and, like I say, at that particular time, I don't think we even had any idea of how to run a national enterprise but we looked at it and thought, "You know, this could be a really great company" and went

down to the bank, the three of us and borrowed a fistful of money and I will say it is always easier to borrow it than to pay it back. But anyway, then I went over and said, "I'm going to be an entrepreneur; I quit." I remember being told that, "Well, you know, if you stay a few more years, you're going to get a lot more in retirement and that is really stupid." But anyway, my husband kept doing his business and the other person kept running the studio and they put me in the office of the company that we had bought and everything, all the products were being sold by telemarketing. It was just tons of people that were sitting there calling schools all over the country. It was real clear to me that we weren't going to make the numbers with the products that we just bought. We were going to have to make something else. So I knew that, because of being in the school district, what products were great that were out there and where were the real holes. I mean, what were subjects that everybody had to learn that the materials weren't very good, and was is plant science. That can also be deadly and very boring to kids because plants don't talk. So I convinced the other two that if we didn't start making a series to follow up what we had, we were going to go bankrupt and we were going to have to pay this huge amount of money back which probably meant you had to sell the house, car and the baby. We created the product and I said we had to have an internet site and that internet site would be as a student research site. So the kids were going to watch the videos, they were going to do the curriculum and they were going to make projects and they were going to gather research from the internet. This was now 1995. So, no one knew how to monetize the site. That word, I don't think it was even in existence, monetize the site or phrase. So my partner, after a while, was saying, "You're spending too much time and too much money on an internet site. This is absolutely ridiculous and we're going to go belly up," and to make a long story short, he said "One of us needs to buy the other out," because he just wanted to make videotapes and I wanted to do this other thing. Well, to make a long story short, my husband and I bought him out and it was probably six weeks later that a company that is now called Ask.com that was Ask Jeeves called because the site that we had created on plant science for kids was answering more questions for Ask Jeeves than any other site there was and they wanted to know if they could come down and visit and could they integrate their Jeeves technology into our product line. So, you're just kind of like, "Sure." To make a long story short, we started

integrating the Jeeves technology into our product line and then I realized we were making a Jeeves product and that was pretty stupid. I told them that. They purchased the company. So, when they purchased the company which was three months after we just bought it from our partner, all of a sudden, all that huge bank loan was gone and that's what has allowed me to do what I want to do now. We didn't sell for hundreds of millions like some of them do but certainly more than we ever thought we would get for the company and that has allowed me to continue to pursue a lot of other ideas when I don't have to worry...neither Bill or I have to worry about putting bread on the table. So when you're free from that, you can try this or try that or try the other. So we just keep reinventing ourselves and are on to another venture now. We are financing the first leg of that, doing the seed money and then we will go for outside investors at the next point. Again, it's education again. That's what I do.

Blanche Touhill: What do you do. Be specific. What kind of materials are you preparing?

Bettie Schwarz: Well, in the process, I learned to write. I didn't learn that when I was young but I have learned to write. So I find that...now, my husband is a much better...he's a much more polished writer and a much more creative writer than I am. I'm very good at facts. I can get it all...I know grade levels; I know what is appropriate for various grade levels and if I might say so myself, I'm a wonderful proposal writer for major grants. I learned that in the school district too. So, in many of the cases, with the products that we're developing, I have written the grants which have been funded and a lot of those have been with cultural institutions which then we market and sell to schools. That's what we're doing again and I'll be, this spring, writing more proposals and I bat about 90%. There's always some that you don't get but there's a real trick to it, art to it, whatever you...it's an experience factor. Just because you are a good writer, doesn't mean that you can necessarily write a good grant or proposal for a grant. So I do that. Then I usually create the overall idea of the project. Recently we've been doing e-books and so what's the e-book going to contain and an e-book, instead of it just being taking a book and putting it into an e-book format, let's do interactive e-books. Where can we get all the photographs? How are we going to show all the photographs? How are we going to stream video in there? How do the things on the page complement each other rather than you're just

repeating it in each of these different formats? How can you bring collaboration into this? For example, if the school purchases the book that you've done, how can you get it so that maybe it's interdisciplinary study. You need lessons in math and science and history. Every teacher doesn't want that and our company can't create everything for everybody that there is for the gifted, to the challenged child. So how can you do a database or a teacher exchange so teachers are contributing their ideas so others can use those too. So creating that infrastructure to be able to do that is another piece of it all and I think that what technology does is, one, it makes you think, and it's not doing it the same way all the time. It's, how can we accomplish the goal? What can the learning outcomes be if we do thus and so? How can we test to see if that's happening? If it's not happening, how do you pivot? Don't just keep going because you said you were going to do that if it's not working. I found in an entrepreneurial setting, that it's easier to do that than in many institutional settings where it's, this is the way it's going to be because we said so. So, I really like the entrepreneurial...

Blanche Touhill: Do you think the schools will look more toward these e-books or this interactive learning and this broad education on a subject or do you think they'll stay with the textbook and the more lecture kind of teacher/student relationship?

Bettie Schwarz: I think it's going to be a little bit of all and I think it's an evolution rather than a revolution. Once you start having these interactive type things, it's very hard to say, "Okay, sit down and read all the words on the page" unless you are highly motivated and a lot of kids are not highly...they can be brilliant but they are not necessarily highly motivated to do that. I think there's certain types of classes that are more appropriate for lecture than others. I think, again, you can do technology in those classes too where you can put the lecture on the iPad and the kid can hear the lecture at home or look what [inaudible 45:46:6] Academy has done on just going over very difficult to understand concepts so that the kid that didn't get it can look at it a thousand times if that's what it takes. I was talking to a teacher at Ladue High School just this past week. One of the math teachers does his work on a Smart Board, saves it to a PDF, turns it into a video and puts those up on his website and so students can see exactly what he said in the class when he was explaining the Pythagorean Theorem or whatever it was. So I think it's not necessarily e-books; I think

libraries will start having a lot of that type of stuff but in grade schools, most schools don't have textbooks for grade school kids. It's more of a resource; the books are a resource. They'll have 10 or 15 different books on Mark Twain and the child is not to read all of them but each will have a little, where are you going to find the information you need, and it's always been that you had movies and you had this and you had that. I think what is coming together now is very much like what the smart phones have done. It used to be, you had a PDA and you had a telephone and you had the internet in your room and you stuffed all your pockets with all of it and then along came Apple who made it all into a smart phone. Now, I sit with mine and I was sitting with it before you got here, reading my e-mail which I can read anywhere in the world, looking at a part of the stuff that we were working on in the office that someone had done last night, checking directions here because, when I went to the other entrance, I couldn't get through to the library; how can I go back another way? Again, people will create more and more things. I also think this country, in terms of innovation, is probably the leader of it all and I hope we can always keep that edge and, again, back to schools, it's teaching kids to think, how do you teach kids to think, find information, teach others what you've learned, those types of things rather than just sitting there and saying, "Here's the book and I have memorized all the facts." I've memorized many facts for many years and don't ask me now to tell you what those facts are because I don't know but I know how to find the information. So whether it's history or math or whatever, I can find the information and I know how to do that and I think that is...

Blanche Touhill: What do you think are the most crucial grades?

Bettie Schwarz: Grade school. I think grade school is the most crucial of all because if you learn to read, think, know your numbers, collaborate with others and get along and you have strong skills at the end of that period, you can go anywhere to the secondary schools. If you arrive at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade with very poor skills, it's just a downhill struggle from that point on and what education does, whether it's a university or K-12, it's really a great sorter rather than a great equalizer. It says, you're smart and you can go on here and, boy, you didn't do it but yet, we keep them all in the same lockstep system. So basically what happens is, some succeed and some don't and everybody, beginning in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, knows who's the smartest kid in the class and who's not doing it well. So I think one thing

you have to do at the early grades is to go in and make sure that you can help the ones at the bottom and still challenge the ones on top. I think that...and some grade school teachers are wonderful. They can deal with any kind of kid on any subject and it's just kind of like playing a symphony orchestra but if what you're trying to do is to say, "Here's what our curriculum is and here are the workbook pages and somebody's going to get 100 and somebody's going to fail," then that's exactly what happens. Those right here do fine; these over here probably are bored and don't want to do the pages, and these over here don't get it. So, we have to be able to do equally as well by the ones that are not right there in the middle.

Blanche Touhill: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life be? I mean, it's a guess.

Bettie Schwarz: Well, I think if I had been born at the time my mother...that would even be more than 50 years; my grandmother, I guess. Women back then were...and again, it depended upon your lot in life. You either worked in the fields with your husband and you're having a bunch of kids so you had the farm hands or you were the prosperous lady that entertained and knew how to pour tea and all that stuff. As I was saying earlier, when we started, the ranching family was not poor farm hands. They owned lots of land but that grandmother cooked for all the people that worked and all that stuff. She was no glamour puss. My mother's family, on the other hand, was the silver tea service; the women did very little and there was a lot of help. Their job was to be an elegant hostess, very well educated but that was more in the arts and poetry and it wasn't educated to go work because you weren't going to be hired, and have beautiful children with lovely manners. So, if I were 50 years ago, I guess it would depend upon which side of the family I was on as to whether I was helping with the cattle drive or whether I was pouring tea.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get involved with International Women's Forum?

Bettie Schwarz: Well, back to the computer labs: another member of the International Women's Forum was just beginning her computer training business and she was doing it really out of an unfinished basement in her house. So we got together on a couple of occasions and I said, "You know, I've got a great idea." I said, "Why don't we send letter..."...we, by this time had taken the front part of the Ladue High School and made it into a



computer lab. As I was saying, we had the courses after school and I wanted to bring the kids in more of a library type setting. It was on the front of the building so you could close off the rest of the building and just open that part and I said, "I've got this great idea. We need to do training for corporations," and Susan, Susan Elliott, was a native St. Louisan and many of the people that were in charge of these corporations she knew. So we wrote letters about a partnership with public and private enterprise and public education and we would train all these people and that's before...this was 19...what did I say, '85? They had the same problem: what were they going to do to train their office personnel? So we took the same computers and at that time businesses used IBMs. Schools were using Apples and put 50...no, it was \$50,000 worth of computers. That's what we...the Board of Education gave us a loan and Susan supplied the people to teach the corporations. After about two years, it was going so great, she decided to start her own company. I had accomplished what I wanted in the school district because we made all this money too and with that money were buying computers for all the classrooms. So, she asked me to lunch and she said there's an organization in town, an international group and...oh, and one thing I failed to say...because of all that, I wound up being Scholastic Magazine's computer educator of the year and it was on the cover of their magazines and my staff had nominated me which was just kind of amazing. I was with Susan and she said there's this international group that is having a chapter in St. Louis and...well, the first thing she said was, "I've got some bad news and some good news. Which do you want to hear first?" and I said, "Well, let's have the bad first" and she said that she was going to move on and I said, "Susan, I knew that was coming." I said, "We have both accomplished what we wanted. We got computers in all these schools with all this money we made and you set up your business so that's not bad news. So now what's the good news?" and she said, "Well, this organization is going to be...a chapter is going to be in St. Louis and you won this national honor. You have to either be at the top of the heap in this or top of the heap in that or have some national honor and I'd like to nominate you for the group," and I said, "Susan, I really don't have time for a lot of women's groups. That's not exactly my thing" and she said, "Oh, I think you really ought to just at least come to one meeting" and I said, "Well..."...at that time I think there were 20 members and I said, "Well, who are they?" So she started naming who

the people were, all of whom, I knew who they were although I didn't know them, and I said, "I believe I'll making that meeting." So I made the meeting and was one of the early members. Again, thanks to the...I was brought in, not as a school administrator but an entrepreneur because of this magazine and she went on to build a company that is now run by her daughter that, the last count was 15, 20 million a year, something like that. I'm not making 15 or 20 million a year but I went on to do my thing and the thing that's been great about the Women's Forum is that I consider the people in the Women's Forum probably my very best friends. We all have a lot in common, though in different fields but everyone has kind of been in a situation where they were a pioneer or they're the only one in that organization that's female or at that level. So, you have a lot of opportunity to help each other and there's no competition. It's not a competitive type group. So I think I've been very lucky.

Blanche Touhill: And you've talked to these people all through the years? How many years have you been in the group then, 20 or something?

Bettie Schwarz: Well, last year was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary so it has to be 26 years. Now, I'm only 30 so that's kind of...

Blanche Touhill: Well, talk to me about...there are many awards that you've received. Is there one or two that really are special?

Bettie Schwarz: I haven't been one that received tons of awards. I mean, I'm certainly not like you. I never had a job as big as yours either. I think that my sense of well-being has to do with my own personal sense of accomplishment because I look back and I think, I don't know how I was able to learn and do all this. I know that there are people that have done more and certainly the women coming up now. We've got all the CEOs now in our Forum. When we started, nobody, no female was a CEO. There were no females that were school superintendents.

Blanche Touhill: I was going to say, there were probably no females that were the associate superintendent?

Bettie Schwarz: No, they weren't and there were principals back in the '40s during the war and most of those were old maids, as they would call them, people that devoted their life to education and did not marry. I wanted it all. I wanted the husband; I wanted the child; I wanted the station wagon with

a contact paper wood on the side or whatever it was, and I wanted a career and I didn't want to give up any of that and so it's all a balancing act and I feel really good about myself. I balanced it. I'm still here; I'm still married to the same guy; my son has turned out to be a fine person and I still have all kinds of ideas and lots of other things I want to accomplish. I have been very lucky. I haven't had a lot of setbacks that some people have had and I've always said, I like to surround myself with people that make me look better than I am so I've never been threatened by any of these women because they make more money or they're prettier or they are younger or older or whatever. I just feel like it's a great opportunity and I think that's the way everyone treats each other so that's why the Forum is so special. I've met people also with all the other meetings in other places that...now, I've never used it as some people have, for business. I don't meet somebody to sell them on my products but I've met some very interesting people that inadvertently have helped me somewhere along the way, not because I asked for it but it was just the association with people and the networking. Some of that has been personal rather than professional help but you get so you see how small the world is: "Gee, I didn't know you knew so-and-so" and "My goodness, if we did this..." ...and I've also found contacts that have helped other people that I do know that needed help, that have come through the Forum.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Bettie Schwarz: Well, thank you very much too. I think it's going to be wonderful, having all these oral histories. I'm anxious to see all the rest of them.